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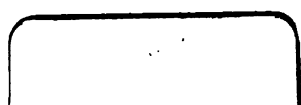
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# THOUGHTS

APPROPRIATE TO THE SEASON  
AND THE DAYS.



THOUGHTS  
APPROPRIATE TO THE SEASON  
AND THE DAYS,

In Lectures,

DELIVERED ON THE TUESDAY MORNINGS DURING LENT 1851,

AT ST. MARGARET'S, LOTHBURY,

BY THE

REV. HENRY MELVILL, B.D.,

PRINCIPAL OF THE EAST INDIA COLLEGE, AND CHAPLAIN TO THE TOWER  
OF LONDON.



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## CONTENTS.

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### SERMON I.

#### THE TEMPTATION OF CHRIST.

ST. LUKE IV, 1, 2.

And Jesus, being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being forty days tempted of the devil.	PAGE 1
--	-----------

### SERMON II.

#### MANIFESTATION OF TRUTH TO THE CONSCIENCE.

2 CORINTHIANS, IV, 2.

But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the Word of God deceitfully ; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's con- science in the sight of God.	35
---	----

### SERMON III.

#### JAEL AND SISERA.

JUDGES IV, 21.

Then Jael Heber's wife took a nail of the tent, and  
took an hammer in her hand, and went softly unto

him, and smote the nail into his temples, and fastened it into the ground : for he was fast asleep and weary. So he died. . . . . 71

#### SERMON IV.

LADY-DAY, 1851.

ST. JOHN XIX, 25.

Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother. . 105

#### SERMON V.

SEEKING GOD EARLY.

♦ PROVERBS VIII, 17.

I love them that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me. . . . . 140

#### SERMON VI.

THE CEDAR AND THE FIR.

ZACHARIAH XI, 2.

Howl, fir-tree ; for the cedar is fallen. . . . . 173

#### SERMON VII.

ENEMIES OF THE CROSS.

EPISTLE TO PHILIPPIANS III, 18.

For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you, even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ. . . . . 209

# SERMON I.

## THE TEMPTATION OF CHRIST.

(SHROVE TUESDAY.)

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ST. LUKE, IV, 1, 2.

*And Jesus, being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being forty days tempted of the devil.*


As we are to enter to-morrow on the season of Lent,—that season during which the Church desires to prepare her children, by wholesome discipline, and devout meditation, for their annual pilgrimage to Gethsemane and Calvary,—it seems well that we should direct your attention to some subject appropriate to the occasion. And none, perhaps, can be more appropriate than that presented by the words of our text. Forty days have been specially set apart for fasting and humiliation, because forty days were spent by our Lord in the

wilderness,—and that, too, in fasting, ere He entered on His great conflict with Satan. Hence the subject of the temptation of Christ is distinctly pointed out to us as belonging to the season ; and it is one, too, which, though it may present more than ordinary difficulties, can hardly fail to furnish matter as interesting as instructive. For it is of great moment, that we be certified that our Lord, according to the assertion of St. Paul, was “in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin”. But then it is very difficult to understand how this could be,—how there could have been the liability to the being tempted, where there was not the possibility of sinning. Yet it is quite essential to our comfort, that we be equally clear upon both facts,—upon the fact, that Christ was absolutely sinless ; upon the fact, that He “suffered, being tempted”. If you throw doubt on the sinlessness of the Mediator, you, of course, throw suspicion on the whole work of

Mediation ; for no being but One, Who was “ holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners”, could have presented unto God an expiatory offering. But, on the other hand, unless you suppose Christ to have been accessible to temptation,—unless you suppose that He might be assailed, even as we ourselves are, by the tempter,—you take away from Him the power of sympathy ; He “ cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities”, unless He have undergone trials very similar to our own.

But before we consider more in detail the several points thus suggested, there are two or three things in our text well deserving attention. The time is remarkable : it was immediately after His baptism that our Lord was called on to encounter the tempter. You read, in the preceding chapter, that, so soon as Jesus ascended from the water in which He had been baptized by John, “ the Heaven was opened”, “ and the Holy

Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from Heaven, which said, Thou art My Beloved Son ; in Thee I am well pleased". No sooner was this solemn inauguration completed, and this noble attestation given, than the season of fearful trial commences. In place of manifesting Himself at once as Messiah, and claiming the homage of His countrymen, Christ is "led up into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil". Learn from this, my brethren, that great privileges are designed to prepare for great trials. It ordinarily happens, that when a Christian, like his Master, has seen Heaven opened, he is brought, like his Master, into special danger and difficulty. If ever you feel that God is manifesting Himself, in an extraordinary manner, to the soul, expect a time of extraordinary temptation. God gives His grace to be used : if He increase the measure, it is because you are entering on scenes where the greater will be needed.



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But the time is not the only remarkable thing,—observe the assertion, that Jesus was “led by the Spirit into the wilderness”. The Spirit, which had just descended upon Christ, and which seems to have acted upon Him as man, even as it does on every one of His followers, moved Him to the going up into the wilderness, for the very purpose of encountering the devil. This deserves the closest attention. Christ actually sought the conflict; Christ Who, afterwards, when delivering a prayer for the use of His disciples, made this one of its petitions, “Lead us not into temptation”. There must, then, be a very wide difference between our Lord and any one of his followers. Our Lord went voluntarily into temptation; but His direction to us, as to His Apostles in the garden, is, “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation”. It may safely be said, that no finite being could voluntarily expose himself to temptation, and not be overcome. The



duty of a finite being, whether angel or man, is to avoid temptation,—never to meet it of his own accord,—but to shun, with all diligence, whatever may endanger his allegiance to God. So that, in fact, there is a violation of duty in the voluntary exposure: the being would sin, in the very act of entering into temptation; and what commenced in one sin, would be almost sure to conclude in a greater. The being, who may expose himself voluntarily to temptation, must be a being who has absolute command of himself; and this can be true of no finite being, though undoubtedly true of such a being as Christ. Observe, then, the incidental proof of our Lord's Divinity: if Christ might do that which He forbade any mere man to do, it must have been because He was not a mere man, but the Son of God in the highest possible sense.

There is one thing more in the text worth noting,—the place into which

Christ was led,—He was led “into the wilderness”. It is as though He was willing to give the enemy every advantage,—He met him in a wild rugged place,—not, as our first parents, in a delicious garden, where everything was calculated to strengthen them for resistance, but in a howling waste, where everything conspired to weaken and dismay. Yes, this champion of shrinking and discomfited thousands, went out alone to meet the Goliath who had “defied the armies of the Living God”; and that the victory might be the more striking,—that we might never doubt His superiority to our inveterate adversary,—He took the wilderness for the field of battle, and foiled Satan, where Satan had all on his side.

Now we wish you to bear in mind these several points, as we proceed with our discourse, particularly the voluntariness of Christ in encountering the devil: they may help to throw light on the more

obscure topics which must afterwards be handled. Let us now briefly review the narrative of the temptation of Christ ; and then let us see whether it do not prove that, though perfectly holy, he was tempted in all points even as we are ourselves ; and that therefore, having suffered, being tempted, “ He is able to succour them that are tempted”.

Now we can hardly doubt, that, although nothing is related of the forty days during which our Lord fasted—for it is at the close of those days that the registered temptation begins—Satan was a tempter throughout the whole period. And yet, the devil must have known that Christ was God : evil spirits were among the first to confess His Divinity. Did, then, the devil hope to overcome God ? This is not to be supposed : Satan is too wise not to know his own weakness. But Christ was man as well as God. And Satan may have computed, that, although as God, Christ was infinitely beyond his

assault, as man He might not be invincible. He had overthrown the first Adam in Paradise—might he not prevail against the second in the wilderness? The case did not necessarily seem hopeless. And Satan may have thought, and that too with perfect truth, that, if he could cause the man Christ Jesus to sin, even in the minutest particular, he should put as effectual an arrest on the Redemption of our race, as if he could meet God in battle, and vanquish the Omnipotent. Hence, in tempting the Mediator, the devil was making a bold, but not apparently hopeless, attempt, to frustrate the Divine plan for the rescue of mankind. And we may be sure, therefore, that the devil was not idle at any part of that time during which the Saviour exposed Himself to his assaults, though he may have reserved his chief attacks to the close, when Christ was likely to have been weakened through watching and fasting. Then he came upon Him with the three great tempta-

tions which the Evangelist has recorded ; and from examining which, we may readily learn, that our Lord was indeed literally “ tempted in all points like as we are”.

For you may gather, from what is said by St. John in his first Epistle, that all sin, to which men may be tempted, is comprised under these three definitions—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. If, therefore, it shall appear that Christ was tempted to commit sin under each of these divisions, it will necessarily follow that His temptations corresponded exactly with our own. For it is worth your observing, that the very first temptation of man involved these three principles of evil enumerated by St. John. There was “ the lust of the flesh”—for the woman saw that “ the tree was good for food”. There was “ the lust of the eye”—for she saw also, we are told, that “ the tree was pleasant to the eyes”. There was, lastly, “ the pride of life”—for she saw that the tree was “ to be

desired to make one wise". Hence, from the very beginning, three principles of evil have entered into the constitution of human temptation; and under one or another of these principles may each separate iniquity be easily classed. If, then, the second Adam was tempted through each of these principles, he was tempted, in all points, like the first, and like any one of his guilty descendants. Turn, then, to the Scriptural account of Christ's temptation in the wilderness. Partaking in all the innocent infirmities of our nature, the Redeemer, we are told, "hungered"; and Satan immediately tempts him to gratify "the lust of the flesh". "Command that these stones be made bread." Whatever may have been the special sin which Christ would have committed by compliance, it is too evident to need proof, that the ground-work of temptation was, in this case, "the lust of the flesh." Foiled in his first attempt, the devil next set Christ on a pinnacle of the

Temple, and said to Him: "If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down." Here our Lord was tempted to an act of ostentatious presumption. For the Jews seem to have literally interpreted those words of Malachi: "The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his Temple"; and probably, therefore, the temptation to Christ was, that He should encourage their false notions of a Messiah, so flattering to human vanity, and, by throwing himself from the battlement, claim the homage of the multitudes who were assembled in the courts of the Temple. At all events, either an ostentatious display in the sight of others, or an ostentatious demand of protection for himself, was certainly the sin to which Christ was tempted: in other words, He was tempted to vanity, and therefore to the gratification of the "lust of the eye". And now when the devil conveyed, or accompanied, Christ to the top of an exceeding high mountain, and, shewing unto Him the

splendid panorama of territory and province, extending on all sides far as the vision could embrace, caused probably, in addition, the pictures of distant and gorgeous empires to present themselves vividly to the Saviour's mind,—and then, probably, arrogating to himself right over the whole, offered to instal the Redeemer at once in its sovereignty,—was not our Blessed Saviour tempted through the third principle of evil, even through “the pride of life”? In the second temptation, He was moved to indulge vanity. But the third temptation advances beyond vanity, beyond “the lust of the eye”, and grounds itself on that ambition, which aspiring men count so nearly a virtue that they refuse to call it a vice; and Christ is solicited to become the sovereign of the whole world, gathering under one empire the far-spreading nations, and putting to shame all former dominion. Here truly “the pride of life” was wrought on by such instrumentality as the devil perhaps never



applied in assaulting any other man ; and the third temptation corresponds so accurately to the third principle of evil, that none of you can fail to discern the connexion. And now, if, as we have endeavoured to shew you, it be true that our Blessed Redeemer was indeed tempted through “ the lust of the flesh”, “ the lust of the eye”, and “ the pride of life”; and if we have the authority of an Apostle for asserting that every temptation to which we can be subjected, makes one or other of these three principles its basis, have we not authority for affirming that Satan assaulted Christ in the very modes, and through the very channels, which he employs in assaulting ourselves ? Yea, may we not declare that it was for the express purpose of being “ tempted in all points like as we are”, that Jesus, according to the statement of our text, “ was led up of the Spirit to be tempted of the devil” ?

But here we are met by the important and difficult question, whether what Christ

suffered, when thus tempted, qualified Him to sympathize with ourselves, when similarly tried? You will readily see, that, though Christ was perfectly holy, He was capable of being tempted—in other words, that the fact of His being tempted is no ways at variance with the fact of His holiness. Our first parents, whilst still in their innocence, were capable of being tempted; and had they stedfastly resisted the tempter, they would have been as holy after, as they had been before, the onset of temptation. But, allowing that a perfectly holy being may be tempted without injury to his holiness, could he be so tempted as to know, by experience, what we ourselves have to endure in being tempted? Could he, in other words, so suffer as to be able to sympathize? If, as St. Paul declares, Christ was “tempted in all points like as we are”, how, you may ask, can this be true, unless, like ourselves, He had been prone to sin, possessed of those corrupt inclinations against

which our chief battle lies? But then, you must remember that, after saying of Christ, "tempted in all points like as we are", the Apostle adds, "yet without sin"; this shews an immeasurable difference between Christ and ourselves; for we are very seldom tempted "without sin"; seeing that, in our case, temptation ordinarily springs from within, or is supported from within; and therefore we ordinarily sin in being tempted, whether or not we resist the temptation. And if Christ was tempted, but without sin, then, you may think, His temptation must have so differed from our own, that, after all, He is not a high priest, who "can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities". Yes, yes, he is; consider a little, you will see that a holy being, with none of our sinful propensities, but with all our innocent infirmities, might be so assailed by temptation, and so suffer from the assault, as to acquire a fellow-feeling with those who are still engaged in the conflict with evil.

In the first place, you should observe, that not only is a holy being capable of being tempted; but his very holiness will give the temptation a power of afflicting him, which it would not have had over one naturally sinful. As a man advances in holiness, as the process of sanctification goes on within his breast, does not sin appear to him more and more odious? Is not the enormity of transgression discerned with increased acuteness and abhorrence, so that each step towards Christian perfection is marked by such a heightened sense of the hatefulness of disobedience, that to "grow in grace" is literally to grow in detestation of every form and degree of iniquity? And if this be true, is it not evident, that, the holier a being is, the more intensely will he suffer from temptation? We are apt to judge,—though no standard could be more deceptive,—of the suffering produced by temptation, by the difficulty experienced in resisting it. Whereas we suppose, that,

where the danger of yielding is less, the pain endured is greater ; for he who hates sin most, will be the most grieved at being solicited to commit it, though the least likely to proceed to the actual commission. You cannot, then, have any difficulty in understanding how Christ Jesus, though actually without sin, might not only be liable to temptation, but might also suffer most acutely from the being tempted. We do not say that He suffered from the struggle of resisting sin,—this would be blasphemous ; for it would be ascribing to Him some tendency to the committing of sin,—but we may, and we do, say, that He must have suffered, and that, too, inconceivably, from the intenseness with which He hated sin. The shock of temptation must have arisen from the clashing between what was sinful without, and what was sinless within. There was in Jesus the most ardent zeal for the glory of the Father, and a love not to be measured towards

rebellious man, and a loftiness of piety which removed Him far away from any attachments which savoured of earth. Tell us, then, whether His whole lifetime must not have been a scene of violence done to these glorious properties? whether it must not have been a keen, and bitter, and burning thing, that He, who was infinitely pure, should have encountered the loathsome suggestions of wickedness, —that He should have been required to keep His compassions fixed, whilst there was the basest ingratitude to alienate them, and His confidence in God unshaken, when an awful eclipse had passed over the light of His countenance? Is it only sinful flesh which can suffer? Is it only an impure spirit? Rather, will not suffering be proportioned to sensitiveness, and will not sensitiveness keep pace with holiness?

Yes, I hear you reply, this is all very well; no doubt Christ suffered greatly in being tempted; but He did not, holy as He

was,—He could not,—suffer just what we, sinful creatures, suffer. Christ, tempted from without, had no feeling within which urged to compliance; whereas, when we are tempted, our own lusts are often the principals,—always auxiliaries in the temptation,—and therefore our chief difficulty will always be in mortifying nature, and our chief pain arise from crucifying the flesh. Undoubtedly there is this difference, this great difference, between what Christ suffered, through being tempted, and what we ourselves suffer: but now tell me, is it a difference which disables Christ from sympathizing with us? It is a common notion, but fully as wrong as common, that a being must have suffered precisely what we ourselves have to suffer, before he can have sympathy with us in our sufferings. What! cannot you feel for and with a fellow-man writhing in pain, though you have never had the disease by which he is tormented? I admit that you must have had some ex-

perience of pain ; but you need not have ever felt precisely the same pain. Feeling what another feels, will not necessarily make you sympathetic ; if it did, hell would be full of sympathy, whereas it is full of hatred : each experiences the misery of every other, and yet there is no pity,—no compassion. Oh no, my brethren, the reverse of the popular opinion is the truth,—absolute purity is essential to perfect sympathy. Sin deadens all the feelings ; it does not quicken them ; and it is just because our Saviour was incapable of sinning, that His having been tempted fits Him to “succour them that are tempted”. The sinless can sympathize with the sinful. To sympathize with a warrior, I must myself have been in battle : but it is not needful that the foe whom he meets should be the very one with whom I myself had to wrestle. It cannot be said that there can be no sympathy, unless the desires to be repressed, or the inclinations to be over-



come, are identically the same. As well might it be said, that, to know what thirst is, a man must have been a reveller at a banquet, and that it is not enough to have been a wanderer in the desert. As well might it be said, that, to know what music is, a man must have been familiar with discord, and that it is not enough to have had the ear always open to melody. Oh, it is true, gloriously true, of the Mediator, that, though He could not sin,—for the Divinity of His Person placed Him at an infinite distance from all moral pollution,—He could so bring Himself into the circumstances of the tempted, as to learn, from His own feelings, precisely what succours they need; and we can look upon Him, when going up to be tempted in the wilderness, not only as ascending to defy and defeat the great adversary of God and of man, but as about to learn how to feel for the very meanest, and to aid the very weakest, of His flock. We have shown

you that there was actual, yea, acute, inconceivable suffering, caused to Christ Jesus by temptation. And this is sufficient to qualify Him to sympathize. He knows by experience what it is to be tempted; and nothing more is required to give Him fellow-feeling with His people, when under temptation. Thus, without the least infringement of that, to infringe which is to undermine the whole Christian system,—namely, the perfect sinlessness of Christ, His infinite distance from all moral pollution, we may contend that Christ was actually tempted, that He actually suffered in being tempted, and that this suffering fitted Him to sympathize with His followers. We behold Him, then, as He goes up to the wilderness,—and we feel that He goes up as our champion and our friend, not only to do battle with the enemy, but to learn how to succour us when ourselves engaged in conflict. We rejoice, not only when we see Him ascending from the

waters of baptism, amid undeniable evidence that He is the well-beloved Son of the Father ; not only when we see Him offering Himself as a sacrifice, and thereby reconciling the whole world to God ; we rejoice that He threw Himself into the way of temptation,—that He allowed Himself to be tempted,—and thus learnt experimentally the power and malice of Satan, as brought to bear upon man,—yea, we rejoice that, amongst other records of what our Lord did and endured upon earth, there should be this of our text,—“ He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being forty days tempted of the devil”.

Now we have thus endeavoured to handle, with as much plainness as its confessed difficulties would admit, a subject interesting at all times, but more especially at this season of the ecclesiastical year. We lose the comfort which we were intended to derive from the Gospel, by thinking too exclusively on the

death of our Redeemer, and comparatively forgetting that He “ever liveth to make intercession”. A dying Saviour is an illustrious object of contemplation ; but we must turn the eye on a living Saviour, if we would know the glories even of the cross. Our rejoicing should be, that within the veil—far indeed from sight, but clearly discernible by faith—there is an Advocate to plead our cause ; one whose sufferings have given Him both the right to succour, and the ability to sympathize. Tempted from without, and alas, yet more from within, we can hope to escape danger, to overcome enemies, and to enter into rest, only through the receiving, in our several trials, such assistance as their nature and extent may prescribe. And to this end we must be certified, that He, in whom we trust, can rightly estimate our wants, and fully furnish their supply. And certified of this we may indeed be, if mindful that our Mediator, He before whom, as an ever-

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living, ever-vigilant, friend, we are privileged to spread our necessities, is God, with all His resources at His disposal; and nevertheless man, with a man's heart, and the memory of a man's sorrows. That our Lord "suffered, being tempted"—we cannot let go this truth, and yet keep hold on the hope of salvation, any more than if we deny or forget that He is "from everlasting to everlasting", "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person".

As we pass through the season of Lent, let us be much with Christ in his conflicts with Satan, that we may both learn to expect fresh temptations ourselves, and gather fresh assurance that we have an High Priest, who can be "touched with the feeling of our infirmities". Let us strive, moreover, to make the season one of contrition and humiliation. The Church, in her Service for Ash-Wednesday, calls upon us to lament the loss, and wish the restitution, of that wholesome

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discipline, which, partly the abuses of some later ages, partly the degeneracy of the present, have rendered impracticable. At the least, we may say to you, in the words of Dean Stanhope: "The chastising ourselves is always in our power, and ought to be so much the more in practice, as the decay of public and judicial chastisement has left us more in our own hands." It is true that the Scriptures contain no express command that we should fast; so that fasting is not to be reckoned a duty in the same sense as is prayer. Yet, inasmuch as fasting may be instrumental to the subduing the lusts of the flesh, or removing hindrances to religion, it has in all ages been recommended by the Church, and practised by those who would make progress in godliness. Remember how our Lord fasted. Remember that the Apostles fasted and prayed, when they laid their hands, and invoked the Holy Ghost, upon Barnabas and Saul. These also, when they had

prayed with fasting, ordained elders in the Churches of Lystra and Iconium. And it should not pass for nothing, that our Church, in her solemn service of to-morrow, addresses us in the language of the Prophet: "Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to Me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning." In thus addressing you, our Church, I would have you most carefully observe, is taking no part in the deceits and errors of Popery. There is nothing which I more desire for you, than that you should have a just and righteous abhorrence of the corruptions and abominations of the Roman Church. But then, I would have your abhorrence an enlightened one. I would have you know what are really the errors of Romanism. I would have you know what it has suppressed, what it has invented, what exaggerated, what corrupted: but I would not have you join in that reckless and indiscriminate condemnation, which

overlooks such portions of truth as may yet be found amid a great mass of falsehood, and which shouts "No Popery", as if in Popery there were nothing whatsoever of Christianity. I, too, say "No Popery"—war, war without pause, without truce, with the errors, the flagrant, fatal errors of Rome: but I do not mean by "No Popery", let us hold nothing, let us do nothing, which Rome holds or does. I would scrupulously distinguish between what Rome retains of Christian doctrine or practice, and what she has introduced or innovated of herself. I do not mean by "No Popery", no grace in the Sacraments, because Rome has multiplied Sacraments, and fearfully substituted the letter for the spirit, the outward ordinance for the inward work. I do not mean by "No Popery", no fasting, because Rome, with her multiplied austerities, has sinfully, ruinously, made penance fill the office of penitence.

As, then, to the duty of fasting, and



other similar duties of humiliation, suggested by our Church as appropriate to the season of Lent, it is needful to draw accurately the line between a contemptuous neglect, and a superstitious observance. I may not feel myself warranted in telling an inquirer, you ought to practise fasting ; for I am no judge as to whether his peculiar trials and temperament render fasting the regimen which he requires. But I do feel warranted in saying—especially when preaching on our Lord's temptation in the wilderness—that the holiest men, downwards from the days of Christ and His Apostles, have testified, from their own experience, that fasting has proved a help in attaining and preserving a devotional spirit ; and I am therefore bound to conclude, that fasting is a means which may often be successful, and whose use, consequently, must not be denounced as out of place and fanatical. There may be in all of us some lust, or some passion, in the combating of

which we should gain assistance from fasting ; for as luxurious living ministers to varieties of vice, why should not abstemious to varieties of virtue? If we look merely at intellectual pursuits, the head is clearer, and the understanding more vigorous, when the body is disciplined by abstinence, than when pampered by indulgence. Why should not something similar hold good in spiritual pursuits? But we lay no burden upon any one. We would simply say, that the design of fasting is admirably expressed in the Collect for next Sunday : “ Grant us grace to use such abstinence, that, our flesh being subdued to the spirit, we may ever obey Thy godly motions in righteousness and true holiness.” Fasting is then carried to the right point, when it has brought the flesh under subjection to the spirit. But as this is a point which, in one man, may be reached far sooner than in another, it can only, after all, be left to the conscience of every individual, that, setting before him-

self the design, he should determine on the requisite degree.

Thus, then, have we endeavoured to lead you to commence the season of Lent with suitable thoughts, and becoming resolutions. For forty days, the days mysteriously hallowed by the fastings of Moses, Elijah, and Christ, would the Church engage you with special acts of humiliation and devotion, the better to fit you for that awful commemoration, when we shall stand round the cross, and behold the Lamb of God offering Himself in sacrifice for our sins. Whatever else ye do, whether ye practise fastings, or omit such outward means, as not required by your case, at least let not Lent be passed through as if it were an ordinary season, presenting no peculiar duties to the Christian and the Churchman. It is a season for calling sin to remembrance, for considering our ways, for meditating on the marvellous love of God in giving up His Son to the shameful death of the cross, for

solemn vows, and holy purposes, of more vigorous separation from the world, and more entire dedication to our high calling in Christ. Thus may you be prepared to go with the Church on her mournful pilgrimage, accompanying her, as, with tears of amazement, with sighs of wonder and of woe, she follows her Blessed Lord to His agony in the garden, to the hall of judgment, to the mount of crucifixion. It must ill become us to pass all at once, without any attempt at preparation, from scenes of business or frivolity, to such scenes as those of Gethsemane and Calvary. We magnify the freeness of salvation: we claim no merit for man: we ascribe it, purely and undividedly, to the grace of God, and the meritorious obedience of Christ, that any man escapes eternal death, and gains entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven. But nevertheless, woe unto that man, who, because so much has been done for him, should think that there remains little which he has to do

for himself. Christ has in no degree diminished the necessity for personal striving; but He has put us into a condition that striving may be effectual. Be careful, then, not to think that you may safely dispense with such godly exercises as the Church, at this time, commends specially to you. And let it comfort you, that you follow a leader who has Himself met and foiled your great adversary; so that you may approach the mercy-seat with such words as these: "By the mystery of Thy holy incarnation, by Thy holy nativity and circumcision, by Thy baptism, fasting, and temptation, Good Lord, deliver us."

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## SERMON II.

MANIFESTATION OF TRUTH TO THE CONSCIENCE.

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SECOND EPISTLE TO CORINTHIANS, IV, 2.

*But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the Word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.*

THE Apostle would seem to be here contrasting himself with the priests of idolaters, with the scribes and priests of the Jews, or with corrupt teachers of Christianity, who imposed on their followers, served their own dishonest or dishonourable ends, or concealed their secret crimes. There was nothing of duplicity in the true servants of Christ: they did not profess one thing, and aim at another: they did not keep back, conceal, or modify, the distinguishing doctrines of the Gospel, in

order to adapt them to the prejudices of their hearers, or make them less at variance with their vices. On the contrary, they endeavoured to set forth the whole truth in the most clear and convincing light ; so that, even if the heart remained untouched, the conscience should be compelled to bear testimony to their message.

There are two of the assertions of St. Paul which we wish to select from the rest, and take as the subject of our present discourse. The first is his assertion as to his “ not handling the Word of God deceitfully”: the second is his assertion as to his commending himself by “ manifestation of the truth to every man’s conscience in the sight of God”. With regard to “ handling the Word of God deceitfully”, both the promises and the threatenings of the Bible may be handled deceitfully. You all perceive this in regard of the promises of Scripture. If they are carelessly or wrongfully applied, and made to speak peace where there is no peace, so

that men are encouraged to hope, on insufficient grounds, for the pardon of sin, assuredly the Word of God is handled deceitfully: it is used to deceive men as to their real state, and to cheat them in their everlasting interests. This is sufficiently obvious, and cannot require any lengthened explanation. But a wrong use may be made of the threatenings, as well as of the promises, of Scripture. St. Paul has elsewhere said: "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men": he did not use the terror, the threatenings, merely to agitate or alarm, but to persuade:—he would have handled these threatenings "deceitfully", had he not handled them for the purpose of persuasion. This, however, requires a fuller statement and explanation. Let us give ourselves then, forthwith, to the considering what it is to "handle the Word of God deceitfully", when reference is made to the threatenings of that word: we will then, in the second place, examine the



statement: "By manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God".

Now we wish to point out to you a great, though not uncommon, error—the regarding fear as too base and slavish a thing to be introduced as instrumental to religion. There is many a Christian who is disquieted by the thought, that it is only the dread of punishment which withholds him from sin; whereas he feels that he ought to abhor the sin itself, and not merely hate its consequences. He will say to himself, I should never have left the world, and abandoned its pleasures and pursuits, had I not feared the penalties which continuance would have insured: and can I have found acceptance with God, when I have sought Him only because I feared Him as an avenger, and not because I loved Him as a father? But it is "handling the Word of God deceitfully", when fear is thus represented as unbecoming in a Christian. No doubt,

the love of God ought to be, and will be, the actuating governing principle in the genuine believer. Fear ought gradually to give place to a more generous sentiment: the converted man ought gradually to acquire a distaste for sin, irrespective altogether of its punishment; such a love for God, and such a longing for that holiness in which He delights, that, even were he secured against its penalty, he would eagerly shun the commission of iniquity. But, nevertheless, fear may be instrumental to the bringing a man to repentance; and it ought not to throw suspicion on the genuineness of repentance, that fear has been the agency employed in its production. Whilst one man may be more accessible through a promise, another may be more accessible through a threatening: but there is no reason why the two, though commencing with such different motives, should not arrive at the same renovation of nature, becoming equally believers in Christ, and justifying equally their faith

by their works. The alone question, of vital moment to the individual, has to do with his being, or his not being, a new creature. And this question is to be tried as a question which relates to an effect, rather than as one which relates to a cause. It is not, what has changed me? but, am I changed? And so long as I can find the evidence of a change, evidence that "old things have passed away, and that all things have become new", it cannot affect my safety, and it ought not to affect my comfort, whether I began in religion by meditating the exceeding love of God, and feeling the heart soften at the sight of a dying Redeemer, or whether my first sentiment was one of horror at the prospect of hell, and my first impulse that of flying from my Maker as armed for my destruction.

Here, then, it is possible that the Word of God may be "handled deceitfully"—fear being represented as so slavish and unworthy a thing, that men shall really be

afraid of being moved by it to righteousness. In the simple exercise of his office, as an ambassador from Him who came "to seek and to save that which was lost", may the preacher arm himself with appalling representations of the wrath that is to come, and, drawing back, so far as human hand may draw, the curtain that shrouds the invisible world, display to the terrified gaze the wretchedness of those that are banished for ever from the presence of the Lord. It is not necessarily in any forgetfulness of the graciousness of the Christian scheme, that he labours to marshal all the retinue of vengeance, and to gather into a picture, on which you almost dread to look, the throne of judgment, and the prison, and the darkness, and the fire. And if it might be more pleasing to you, that he should speak on the exceeding love of God, and confine himself to the marvellous demonstrations of that love which are furnished in and through the work of our redemption, you

are, nevertheless, not to think that he at all lays aside his peculiar office as a minister of the Gospel, and travels back into that of a minister of the Law, when he stands before you as the herald of judgment, and announces, as though he would anticipate the trumpet and the sentence, that the impenitent shall come forth from the grave to be cast into hell. He is but shielding himself against the charge of "handling the Word of God deceitfully", when he thus assigns to fear its due place as a motive to repentance. Though we own, that, as we have already hinted, the Word would be "handled deceitfully", a wrong use would be made of its threatenings, were the preacher to stop here, contenting himself with having thus arrayed the terrors of the Lord. It should be in the hope, and with the design, of obtaining a willing hearing for the gracious proffers of forgiveness and reconciliation, that the preacher portrays the fearful things of vengeance, and shews the

hosts of the disobedient overtaken and overwhelmed by the just anger of God. If he use the law as a schoolmaster, it should be specifically with the purpose of bringing men to Christ ; and the sermon which should leave its hearers appalled by its representations of a coming day of vengeance, and not strive to take advantage of their fears, in order to induce them to seek a place of refuge, would be constructed in forgetfulness of the first duty of a Christian preacher, and deserve all that could be said as to “handling the Word deceitfully”—deceitfully, just as though the Word were given to furnish figures which might move, awfully and mysteriously, to and fro on a darkened stage ; in place of for the display of a cross, on which He who hangs gives utterance to the cheering words : “Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth”.

But where terror is employed to make way for persuasion, there is the best prospect of success, and the least likelihood

of any deceitful handling of the Word. Oh, it is not necessarily because a man has any pleasure in startling and scaring those to whom he is appointed to minister, that he is frequent in his delineations of everlasting punishment. If he often summon his hearers to accompany him in thought to the scenes of the last judgment, and if he labour, with all the power of which he is master, to fix their gaze on the horrors of that portion which must be their own if they go hence in impenitence, is it necessarily that he takes delight in the fearful picture which he strives to present? is it necessarily because of the scope which is afforded for the excursions of the imagination, or of the opportunity furnished for mighty declamation, that he selects as his theme the consummation of all things, when God shall come forth as an avenger of wickedness, and heap his retributions on all who have lived in contempt of His laws? Not so; the preacher may have as little of natural liking as any one of his hear-

ers for the announcements of vengeance and anguish. It might be far more congenial with his feelings, to expatiate on the privileges of the believer, or to enlarge on the manifestations of God's love towards man, trusting to the persuasiveness, which there ought to be in every such manifestation, for the softening the hard hearts with which he has to deal. But, unless he would "handle the Word of God deceitfully", he may not neglect the endeavouring to possess himself of those avenues into the soul, which are only to be opened through awakening men's fears. With all his desires bent on the persuading men to receive Christ as their Saviour, he may feel that he shall take means best adapted for accomplishing his end, by speaking to them of God as a consuming fire, and showing them how His enemies shall be finally bound up in bundles for the burning. He has no intention of stopping here. He has no intention of leaving his hearers in



their terror and apprehension, bewildered by danger, and ignorant of any mode of escape. Let him only succeed in exciting terror and apprehension, and he is ready with his exhibitions of the work of Mediation; exhibitions which, in all likelihood, will be regarded with aversion, or at best with indifference, so long as there is no actual sense of exposure to punishment. It is the persuading men, at which he aims. But in order to bring them into such a position that they will be accessible to persuasion, he deals with them as he would with the individual whom he wished to persuade to leave a sinking ship, or a falling house—painting the certainty and the fearfulness of the coming destruction, and calculating that, if he can only succeed in producing conviction of danger, he shall quickly be met by the eager enquiry, “What must I do to be saved?”

I would then avoid, under every point of view, the charge of “handling de-

ceitfully the Word of God". Therefore would I make full use of the threatenings of the Word, but only that I may bring you to the accepting the mercies. You shall not charge me with keeping back the Gospel. You shall not have cause to say, that, commissioned to publish to you the glad tidings of pardon, I seemed to have nothing on which to speak but the fearfulness of punishment. And nevertheless I would make use, frequent use, of the imagery of wrath and tribulation. But why, you may say, why turn upon you the blaze of that fearful conflagration, whose very flame is darkness, when I might illuminate the scene with the rich brightness of immortality? Why burden the air with the shriek and execration, when I might turn upon you the echoings of the heavenly minstrelsy, and cause you to hear the distant roll of that mighty anthem, with which the thousand times ten thousand magnify the Creator and Redeemer? Because I seek

to persuade you. Because I cannot, as a man, think on the tremendousness of that doom, which is in store for the impenitent, and not long to prevent that doom from being shared by any of my hearers. Because I feel, that, in order to make you shun destruction, I must make you aware of the fearfulness of destruction. Because I would persuade you to repent, that iniquity may not be your ruin. Because I would persuade you to believe, that so you may be sheltered in the day of God's vengeance. With no view of keeping back from you the Saviour, but simply with the view of persuading you to receive Him as your Saviour, do I seek to show you, how, when the elements are melting with fervent heat, and the Heavens are being rolled up as a scroll, the unrighteous shall have no plea to urge, why they should not be cast into the fire "prepared for the devil and his angels". It is your salvation which I seek. I would persuade you not to be

broken on the rack, and I persuade you by shewing you the rack. I would persuade you not to throw yourselves into the unquenchable fire; and I persuade you by shewing you that fire. I would persuade you not to give yourselves to the undying worm; and I persuade you by shewing you that worm. Ah, if I could now waken in one of the careless amongst you an apprehension of God's wrath; so that, by sweeping, as it were, the scene for judgment, and bringing before him the awfulness of the last assize, and shewing him how the hosts of the wicked will be beaten down by the irrevocable sentence, "Depart, depart", I could penetrate him with fear, and make him shrink from what is coming on the earth—with what eagerness, with what hope, might I then set before him the cross! With what expectation might I then say to him, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!" Then, if ever, should I find him disposed to cry from the heart,

“Lord, save me, or I perish!” And in this his trembling willingness to lay hold on the hope set before him in the Gospel, would there be the most touching demonstration that the faith which saves may be closely linked with the fear which disturbs: and that therefore, in arraying the threatenings, as preparatory to a display of the promises, of Scripture, I had not walked in craftiness, nor handled the Word of God deceitfully; but rather, by manifestation of the truth, had commended myself to the man’s conscience in the sight of God.

But this brings us to the second topic of discourse presented by our text: and this is that of there being a manifestation of truth to the conscience, where perhaps it is not acted on, nor even acknowledged. There is something very expressive in the words, “in the sight of God”. St. Paul was satisfied that the doctrines which he preached, and the motives by which he was actuated, were equally such as ap-

proved themselves to God: he had no hesitation as to this: but, whatever the opposition and misrepresentation which he met with from men, he could appeal to Him who "searcheth the hearts", secure of being accounted the faithful minister of Christ. It was a noble thing, to be able thus unhesitatingly to speak of commending himself to the consciences of his hearers "in the sight of God". This assurance of the approval of his Master in Heaven must have been more to the Apostle than the applause of the world, and might well compensate for its frown and its scorn.

But we will not enlarge upon this: we will confine ourselves to the alleged manifestation of truth to the consciences of the hearers. And here, that we may bring our remarks within definite limits, let us speak of the great truths to which we have already adverted: let us consider, that is, how, in preaching a future judgment, and a propitiation for sin, the

preacher is likely to commend himself to the consciences of those whom he addresses; whether as, in discharge of the office with which he has been entrusted by God, he dilates on the awfulness of judgment, and then lays open the appointed process through which wrath may be escaped, there is not commonly a witness in the breasts of those to whom he speaks, that his words are verily the words of soberness and truth. We shall appeal in evidence to yourselves: the case is one in which you must yourselves pass the verdict: otherwise will it necessarily be void of all force. We are now before you simply to announce a judgment to come: and if you will not give us audience out of reverence to Him in whose name we speak—for that might beg the question—we claim it on the ground, that what we have to publish is of an interest so overwhelming, that no being, with an understanding and a heart, may refuse to give ear.

Men, brethren, and fathers, listen, we beseech of you. This goodly creation, which ye inhabit, is under the government of that Almighty Being, at whose bidding it first rose out of nothing. Though His sovereignty be not visibly exercised, and though there may appear to you many inconsistencies, which, with your present amount of knowledge, you cannot wholly solve, we may tell you that He takes note of everything done upon this earth, designing hereafter to vindicate all His attributes in the apportioning to every man according to his works. He is a just God and a holy; and though, for a time, He may suffer wickedness to prosper, and not openly defend or recompense righteousness, yet is there coming a day, on the which He will adjust the discrepancies of the present estate, exalting His servants to happiness, and covering His enemies with confusion. Day of wonders, day of terrors! Every one of you must have part in this universal assize. Ye are not made



to perish with the brute. Ye are accountable creatures, and immortal as well as accountable. Ye must therefore come forth from the graves, and stand at the tribunal of God. I have no power of describing to you the magnificent fearfulness of the scene: neither have I any wish to lay hold on your imaginations; for it might be, that, dazzled by the gorgeousness and majesty, or confounded by the crash of dissolving systems, or hurried along by the rush of the myriads that press towards the throne, you would overlook your own personal concern in the vast affair, and forget that process of trial which shall be just as individual to every one amongst you, as though he alone were to be judged, and the innumerable multitude, gathered around, were gathered only as spectators, or assessors with the Judge. But I would fix your thoughts on the principles upon which the trial will proceed. I declare to you, from the necessary attributes of the Being before

whom you must appear, that sin, of every kind and degree, will mark out its perpetrator for vengeance; and that, unless you shall be able to present to the Judge an unspotted obedience, there will be no power in yourselves of gaining shelter from His wrath: no excuses will be of worth, no palliations be admitted: and you must stand defenceless and speechless, whilst a sentence of banishment goes forth, consigning you for ever to a punishment as severe as enduring.

And can I think, that whilst, as the herald of judgment to come, I announce to you the terror of the Lord, there is no voice heard in the solitude of your own souls, bearing witness that I speak only truth? I cannot think this. I rather think, that, in the majority of instances, there is that internal manifestation which is spoken of in our text. You might be ready to argue with me, if I would go into argument. You might profess, were we to sit down to debate, that you had

doubts as to your immortality, or, at least, your accountableness. You might urge the weakness and corruptness of your own nature, and the immeasurable benevolence of that of God, and endeavour to establish some inference as to the likelihood of your being dealt with by a lighter measure than strict justice would prescribe. But we shall venture to affirm, that, in all this, you would be only struggling against the dictate and decision of conscience. We shall venture to believe, that, whatever might be the case, were we to meet you in a kind of intellectual warfare, we have on our side the testimony of conscience, whilst we confine ourselves to the announcement of the fact, that God will judge the world in righteousness, so that no worker of evil shall be hidden from His wrath. We know too well what power there is in that principle, which the Almighty hath set up in the soul as His representative and vicegerent, to doubt that the story of a state of retribution, a

state, man's portion in which is to be accurately determined by his actions whilst on earth, comes upon men like the echo of what they have heard syllabled within, when a monitor, whom they could neither discern nor silence, has given forth his emphatic representations of the character of God; a character pledging Him to the punishment of all unrighteousness, to the exacting, to the last fraction, every penalty of violated law. And it is a great source of encouragement to the preacher, thus to feel that he has conscience on his side. He does not think it necessary to stop at every stage, that he may build up a laboured argument as to the truth of the propositions which he has laid down, or announced. He is not compelled to be for ever busy with a process of demonstration, as though what he uttered had no self-evidencing power, but must be fenced about with an array of credentials, and could not otherwise look to gain assent to its truthfulness. He knows that

the message which he delivers carries with it its own proof; so that, whilst he might be casting about for methods, by which to introduce it, and secure for it an attentive and impartial hearing, it has gone straight-way into the recesses of the mind, and there extorted a confession, however unwillingly rendered, and however speedily forgotten, of its being precisely such as the Almighty might be expected to send.

And if this be encouraging to the minister, as assuring him of an auxiliary within the citadel which he is anxious to storm, it helps to make the hearer inexcusable, if he do not yield to the communications with which he is plied. Men, brethren, and fathers, once more I announce to you judgment to come. It shall break upon the earth, that day of wonder and of terror, when, from the sea, and the mountain, and the desert, shall swarm the buried families of humankind, and the dead, small and great, shall stand before their God. It shall come: "one day is

with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day": and it is no evidence against the complete unhinging of the present economy, that, for century after century, the earth and the heavens have given no token of change, but have gone forward on their silent and unwearied march. And when it comes, "Where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" I announce it as the day when the wicked shall be as stubble for the burning. I announce it as the day when there will be no shelter for the proud, no mask for the hypocrite, no standing place for the presumptuous. I announce it as the day, when books shall be opened, on which the pen of infinite knowledge and purity has registered every action, every word, every thought: and I ask you whether there be one who can think to abide so fearful a scrutiny: I shut you up to the conviction, that there is reserved the blackness of eternal darkness for all who appear at the judgment in a righte-

ousness of their own, and without having a Mediator to undertake their cause. And if, after having made the announcement, I leave you with a sort of confidence, that the great truth of a judgment has been so brought before you, that you are inexcusable, if you continue to live as though there were no future trial—is it that I think that I have thrown power into my announcement? Is it that I think that I have so described the transactions of the last day, that the very force of the description will sufficiently witness against you? Oh, not so. It is just because I know that these proclamations of judgment to come are, in all probability, answered from within yourselves; that, whilst I speak, there is an irrepressible verdict, given down in your souls, that I speak only truth,—because, in short, whilst thus we set before you the terror of the Lord, “not walking in craftiness, nor handling the Word of God deceitfully”, there are reasons in abundance for trusting, that

“by manifestation of the truth, we are commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.”

Such is the manifestation of truth in the conscience, whilst nothing is set forth but the judgment with its terrors. But, as we have shewn you, he who would avoid handling the Word of God deceitfully, does not stop here, but goes on to unfold the provisions of the Gospel. And is there still the manifestation of truth to the conscience? Yes—when we preach Christ Jesus to those, whose fears we may have succeeded in exciting, we do not preach what external proof alone may induce men to receive, but rather what may commend itself by its own self-witnessing power, or by the testimony which conscience would deliver in its favour. And it is a great truth, that, stupendous and multiplied as are the outward evidences of the Gospel, they are not indispensable to the proving its divine origin to the man who examines it in humility



and sincerity. Such a man will find so much of internal evidence, such consummate knowledge of his heart, such acquaintance with all his moral wants, and so exact and adequate a meeting of those wants, that he will be satisfied as to himself and the Bible being the work of the same Author ; much as another will be satisfied that He who made the light, made also the eye, from observing how exquisitely the one is adapted to the other. Men, indeed, may speak of the strangeness of the Gospel : they may make that strangeness an objection against the Gospel : but the simple truth is, they do not know God ; they do not know themselves, their wants, their dangers ; and it is only the absence of this knowledge which causes the plan of redemption to appear so improbable as to be almost incredible. Give them the knowledge—let them feel something of the evil of sin, of the distance to which it must have removed the creature from the Creator, of the despite which

it does to all the Divine attributes, and, consequently, of the wrath to which it must expose its every worker ; and, in place of anything strange in the scheme of propitiation, they will feel it to be precisely what they need, though immeasurably beyond what they could ever have hoped.

It is here that we expect a manifestation in the conscience. There may be no such manifestation, where the individual has no sense of peril, has never examined his position, as an immortal accountable being, relatively to a God whose attributes irrevocably pledge him to punish all sin. But there will be such a manifestation, where the individual has been agitated by the terrors of judgment, and has seen himself lost, eternally lost, if brought to the bar, and there tried on his own merits. So soon as the Gospel is published to this individual, he will be aware of its suitability ; it will commend itself to him as accurately meeting his necessities, or as

wonderfully supplying all those wants, the discovery of which had almost brought him to despair. There is nothing wanted but that you should feel yourselves sinners, and you will feel that Christ is the very Saviour whom you need. You will have the witness within yourselves. Though he be the Son of God, he will not seem to you greater than you want; for how should a finite being exhaust the penalty which you know to be eternal? You will be amazed—but it will be at the exceeding love of God, and at the unmeasured condescension of the Mediator; not at the scheme in itself, when compared with the objects which it proposed to effect. No, no—men may object against the revealed plan of redemption, as if it transcended all belief, as if the alleged interposition were too vast, and too strange, to be made credible by testimony. But they must be men who can know nothing of sin: they must be men before whose view has never passed the dread array of final

judgment, who can never have duly calculated what the Divine anger must be, nor inquired into the possibility of its being escaped. They may have asked the stars; and the stars, in their multitude and magnificence, may have seemed to reply, that surely so stupendous a thing as the humiliation of God, could hardly have taken place on behalf of one inconsiderable province, one insignificant race. But they ought not to ask the stars—though, indeed, there is no voice from those gorgeous hosts to sanction their infidelity. They ought to ask their sins. If the plan be too vast to be credible, it must, at all events, be vaster than was requisite to the ends which God sought to accomplish. And this may be said by those who have never felt themselves sinners, but not by those who have. Those who really feel themselves sinners, have so overwhelming a sense of the demerit of sin, of the extent of its penalty, and of the obstacles which lie in the way of its

forgiveness, that you would destroy all their hope, in disproving that a Divine person had died in their stead. They do not feel that they could do with less than revelation unfolds—vast, incalculable, inconceivable, it is nevertheless only adequate to their ascertained wants, and to diminish it by a fraction were to leave them in destitution.

And on this account may we justly speak of a manifestation in the conscience, as the preacher, after wielding the thunders of the law, sets himself to persuade through the announcements of the Gospel. Men, brethren, and fathers, if we could appeal to the witness of your consciences, as confirming what we said in reference to judgment, we may do so also as confirming what we publish in reference to salvation. Is there one amongst you who trembles at the thought of appearing before God, appearing as a sinner, with the burden of his iniquities, before a Being who is pledged and armed to pour destruction on

every worker of evil? Let that man listen—we seek now to persuade him. “God hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” God hath “found a ransom”, His own dear Son, on whom He laid our guilt; and now there is no condemnation to them who believe in Christ. Oh, does not this vast scheme of mercy commend itself to you? I think it must. I think that its very suitableness must be an evidence with you of its truth. I feel as if I were uttering that which asks no proof but what it obtains from yourself. I appeal to no prodigies. I neither quote nor work miracles. But I feel, that, in proposing deliverance through the blood and righteousness of Christ, to those who, weighed down by their sins, shrink in terror from the judgment, I am proposing what must approve itself to them, as bearing traces of a communication from God. And therefore shall I go

down from this pulpit, aware that I have offered no demonstration of the truth of Christianity, that I have made no attempt towards refuting infidelity; and yet believing that I have called out an evidence, as satisfactory to him who feels it, as though I had been able to perform a miracle in his presence: for, after shewing the crucified Mediator to the trembling and contrite amongst you, why may I not exclaim with the Apostle, that, thus avoiding the handling the Word of God deceitfully, “by manifestation of the truth I commend myself to every man’s conscience in the sight of God”?

One brief application of the subject—it shall be only for a moment, it shall be to the young. We must not handle the Word of God deceitfully; and therefore are we urgent with them to the remembering their Creator in the days of their youth, to the fleeing youthful lusts, which war against the soul. We know the terrors which await you, if you spend the

spring-time of your days in the service of sin—the bitter regret, the unavailable remorse, with which you will look back on wasted time, neglected opportunities, unlawful pleasures, even if God lead you to repentance, and you be not suddenly thrown, with all your sins upon your heads, into that outer darkness where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Therefore would we persuade you to walk in wisdom's ways, which are ways of pleasantness, to choose good and not evil, life and not death. And never tell me, that, whilst thus labouring to persuade you, there is no manifestation of truth commending itself to the conscience. You know that I am right: you feel that I am right. You may neglect the counsel, you may scorn the counsel. But you secretly acknowledge that I speak only truth, whilst telling you that to follow a multitude to do evil, to associate with the profligate, to obey your passions, to forget the counsels of parents, and to despise the



law of the Lord—is the sure way to incur shame and misery here, to keep up tribulation and anguish for the ages of eternity. I add no more—they confess that I am right — Great God, snatch them from going on in what is wrong.

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## SERMON III.

J A E L   A N D   S I S E R A .

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JUDGES IV, 21.

*Then Jael Heber's wife took a nail of the tent, and took an hammer in her hand, and went softly unto him, and smote the nail into his temples, and fastened it into the ground : for he was fast asleep and weary. So he died.*

THE narrative of which these words are a part has been read to you in the first lesson of this morning's service. Perhaps, as you listened to it ; as you heard of Sisera fleeing for his life from the field of battle, and seeking shelter in the tent of Jael ; and then of Jael as receiving the fugitive with open arms, performing towards him all the offices of hospitality ; and when, confiding in her honour, he had fallen fast asleep, advancing in the manner described in our text, and murdering him ; yes, murdering her weary

and slumbering guest; I say, when you heard all this, probably your feeling was, what a frightful crime! what a monster of a woman! But if you were to go on to read the next chapter, the first lesson of this evening's service, in which the Prophetess Deborah celebrates, in inspired strains, the overthrow of Sisera, you would find a very different judgment passed upon Jael. Thus it is that she is spoken of, "Blessed above women shall Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, be: blessed shall she be above women in the tent." And then the Prophetess proceeds to use the language of encomium on that very part of Jael's conduct which appears to us most revolting and atrocious—her deceitful kindness towards the wanderer whom she was about to assassinate. "He asked water, and she gave him milk; she brought forth butter in a lordly dish." There is a great difference then between the estimate which we should be inclined to form of Jael,

and that delivered and recorded by the Spirit of God. She cannot have been the treacherous, sanguinary wretch which we naturally suppose; she is praised and honoured in Scripture; and it behoves us to take heed how we heap on her our censures. Here, however, is a great subject of discourse: Jael appears to us a hateful murderess; our feelings towards her are those of horror and indignation; yet, in the Bible, she is enrolled as amongst the noblest of heroines: her subtle kindness towards her too-confiding guest, her taking the hammer and the nail—these are applauded, and that, too, by one whom God's Spirit moved to lofty utterances. Surely there is much here which requires to be examined and explained: come, then, let us see what defence may be made for Jael; how she may not only be acquitted of crime, but held up as deserving of encomium, in driving the nail into the temples of Sisera, and fastening it into the ground.

Now there are other cases in the Bible not altogether dissimilar to this ; cases in which, though what appears to us criminal has been done, the Divine approval is unequivocally expressed. It is thus in reference to Abraham, when he offered up Isaac,—we shrink from a father slaying his son ; but the voice of the Almighty proclaims him blessed for the deed. Thus again with respect to Rahab—we are ready to look with disdain on a woman who could betray her country ; but the Apostles of Christ commemorate her faith, and class her amongst the worthies whom all ages should honour. We may say moreover of the wars of the Jews with the Canaanites, that there is something very revolting in that indiscriminate slaughter by which they were characterized. The not sparing even the infant and the suckling appears to us a barbarity which would have utterly disgraced the most savage tribe—and yet not only was this the custom of the

Israelites, it was a custom prescribed them by God, so that Divine sanction could be pleaded for that which has the aspect of a most cruel and sanguinary proceeding. Thus again, as we have already hinted, it is evident, that, in place of perpetrating an act of great wickedness, Jael performed a most praiseworthy deed in killing the man whom she had offered to protect. The deed obtains for her the most marked approbation, and that too from God Himself, speaking by the mouth of the Prophetess Deborah. Now such cases as these are well deserving inquiry; indeed it is of the first importance, that we search out a satisfactory account of what appears at variance with the known character of God, representing Him as either commending or approving what is morally wrong. This is no point of nice and curious speculation; for if the Bible really depict God as giving His sanction to crimes, we can no longer receive it as

undeniably His Word. Of course, our attention must be chiefly bestowed on the particular case of Jael and Sisera. But we may endeavour to take occasion to glance, in the way of illustration, at similar instances to which we have referred, whilst much which we advance will be generally applicable, and therefore may readily be transferred to any case demanding explanation. At present, therefore, let us confine ourselves to the history brought before us by the lesson for the day—examining in the first place what Jael did ; and endeavouring in the second place to vindicate her conduct.

Now the facts are but few, and have already been adverted to in our introductory remarks. It appears that Jael was the wife of Heber the Kenite ; and of Heber, we are told that he was of the children of Hobab, the father-in-law of Moses. There was thus something of an ancestral connexion between the family of Jael, and the children of Israel, to

which we may take occasion to refer in the sequel. But, notwithstanding this connexion, it does not appear that Heber took part with the Israelites—for the Lord had, at this time, sold the Israelites, for their iniquities, into the hand of Jabin, King of Canaan; whereas it is said that “there was peace between Jabin and the house of Heber the Kenite”. Undoubtedly it was on this account that Sisera directed his steps to the tent of Jael: he would not have put himself in the power of an enemy; but he might calculate on protection from one who was in alliance with his sovereign. And this aggravates what you may be disposed to consider as the treachery of Jael: it was not merely an act of hospitality, it was required by a solemn league, that she should shelter Sisera from his pursuers. Moreover, the circumstances of Sisera could scarcely fail to excite the commiseration of Jael: there is always something very melancholy and touching in great



and sudden reverses : men, who are not ordinarily distinguished by compassion, can scarcely avoid feeling it, when they see the prosperous spoiled, in a moment, of all their acquisitions. In the morning, Sisera had had an immense army under his command, with nine hundred chariots of iron,—now he was approaching Jael's tent, a lonely fugitive, faint from toil, and tracked by inveterate foes. She comes out to meet him, not waiting until he should prefer a petition for shelter, and solicits him to enter the tent. "Turn in, my lord, turn in to me ; fear not." Thus encouraged, and assured of, at least, such protection as Jael could afford, Sisera entered the tent ; Jael covered him with a mantle, either that he might repose in greater comfort, or be concealed from his pursuers. He then asked for water, that he might slake his thirst ; but Jael, assiduous, as it would seem, in shewing every kindness to her guest, opened a bottle of milk, and gave drink to the exhausted

warrior. He then requires her to stand at the door of the tent, that, if any one came to inquire whether there were a man there, she might answer him, No. It is very observable, that we are not told that Jael agreed to do this. She makes no reply. Sisera distinctly asked her to tell a lie in his cause: but the silence of Jael seems rather to indicate that her reverence for truth would not allow her to do this.

And now comes the startling part of the narrative. Hitherto we have seen Jael as the hospitable woman, anxious to do all in her power for one pressed by calamity, and encompassed by danger. She has acted, as we should have expected any one to act who possessed the common feelings of humanity—more especially a woman, in whom we naturally look for a greater measure of tenderness and sympathy. But now the scene is suddenly changed. Placing confidence in the fidelity of Jael, having no suspicion of

treachery, and quite overcome with fatigue, Sisera had sunk into deep sleep, forgetting for a while his disasters and perils. Does Jael watch him as his guardian? Is she looking out from the tent, that she may descry the pursuers, and, if possible, divert them from the chase? You would have expected something of this kind from her previous conduct. But, in place of this, we behold her approaching with the stealthy step of an assassin: her guest is before her, buried in profound slumber: the man to whom she had offered protection, who had confided in her, and who, by his very sleep, threw himself more unreservedly on her guardianship—can she abuse his confidence, can she be his murderer, after having pledged herself to his safety? It is even so. This Jael, this woman, who had just before exhibited, as it seemed, all the gentleness of a woman's heart, approaches with noiseless tread the slumbering warrior—a nail in one hand, and a hammer in the other—and, as

though she had been practised in the dark trade of the assassin, drives the nail into his temples, and that, too, with such force, that it is fastened into the ground. Having thus murdered her guest, she hastened to the tent door, that she might publish her exploit; and when she saw Barak approach, eager in pursuing Sisera, she ran to meet him, like a heroine glorying in her triumph, and hurried him to the scene of assassination, as though longing, in place of shunning, to look upon her victim, exclaiming, "Come, I will shew thee the man whom thou seekest."

Such are the facts of the narrative; and they make up, you will say, as foul and bloody a tragedy as was ever acted on this theatre of crime. And yet a prophetess, a person speaking by the Spirit of God, declares: "Blessed above women shall Jael, the wife of Heber, the Kenite, be; blessed shall she be above women in the tent." The question therefore now is, what vindication can be offered of the

conduct of Jael ; how can we prove it consistent with what is known of the character of God, that He should pronounce this woman blessed, whilst her hands are red with the blood of one who had committed himself to her promised protection ? We will use no special pleading. If Jael received Sisera into her tent with the intention of murdering him, she must be left to the execration of posterity. But there are, we think, plain and straightforward reasons, from which to infer that Jael had no design of killing Sisera ; that she acted therefore with perfect honesty, not with atrocious duplicity, when she offered him shelter. What likelihood is there that Jael purposed to murder Sisera ? He was not her enemy—for there was peace between her husband's family and the Canaanites. She had nothing to gain by his death ; and even if she had, she needed only to refuse him a shelter : the enemy was in pursuit, and would have quickly overtaken the fugitive. Had she

wished his death ever so much, there was nothing for her to do but to leave him to his fate ; he was a doomed man, and there was no necessity that she should endanger herself to insure his destruction. For let it be well observed, that the killing Sisera was a most dangerous undertaking for a lonely woman. We do not know that, in all the annals of daring achievement, you can find a bolder action. Sisera was probably the greatest warrior of his country, renowned far and wide for his courage and success. Shall she endeavour to entrap this man, one whom danger might render suspicious as well as desperate, and thus run the risk of exposing herself to the violence of his revenge ? Besides, if she succeeded so far as to engage his confidence, could she venture to attack him, even in his sleep ? The almost certainty was, that, the moment the nail entered his forehead, before she could strike a blow, or at least such a blow as would be fatal, Sisera would awake, and, starting

suddenly up, seize the arm of the assassin, and deal the death intended for himself. It would take much to make me believe that Jael, whatever her intrepidity, or whatever her bloodthirstiness, purposed the committing such an action, when she asked Sisera into her tent. The action was too perilous ; it required too much of a more than masculine hardihood, or rather ferocity, even had there been the strongest inducement ; whereas there appears to have been no inducement at all, but rather the reverse. We add to this, that, since we have only the silence of Jael, when she is asked by Sisera to tell a lie in his cause, the probability is, that she had a reverence for truth ; and, if so, she must have meant what she said, when she gave the invitation and the promise : “ Turn in, my lord, turn in to me ; fear not.”

It is, then, in the highest degree improbable, that there was anything of premeditated treachery on the part of Jael.

And we make a long advance towards vindicating Jael, if we find reasons for supposing that she acted honourably and uprightly in inviting Sisera to her tent. It is one of the most repulsive things in her conduct, on any other supposition, that she came forth, with the look and voice of a friend, to meet the distressed fugitive, and that she was most officious in performing to him the rites of hospitality, whilst, all the while, she designed to stain her hands with his blood, and only watched an opportunity for completing her murderous project. This it is, as we have endeavoured to shew, which you have no right to charge upon Jael. The probabilities seem all the other way. And we believe, that, whatever account may be given of her subsequent conduct, the only candid construction to be put on this part of the narrative, is, that Jael was thoroughly sincere in offering an asylum to Sisera; that it was not with the language of deceit, nor in order to cloak a bloody



purpose, but simply in friendship of heart, and with the earnest desire of succouring a distressed man, that she invited the fugitive to her tent, and covered him with the mantle, and refreshed him with the milk.

But nevertheless, you will say, she killed Sisera—whether premeditated or not, the murder was committed—and what is to be urged in extenuation of so barbarous a deed? This brings us to examine by what motive Jael was instigated, or on what principle she acted, in putting to death her slumbering guest. We reckon it the satisfactory explanation of her conduct, the one which removes every difficulty, that she was led by a Divine impulse, or in obedience to a Divine command, to take away Sisera's life. It is true that we are not told, as we are in the case of Abraham, that God enjoined the action, which, without such injunction, would have been immeasurably criminal. But we are clearly told

that God approved the action ; and since the action in itself, and irrespective of His command, was a flagrant offence, we necessarily infer, that what He approved He had also directed. We find Deborah saying to Barak, when he hesitated to go out to battle with the Canaanites : “ Notwithstanding the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honour ; for the Lord shall sell Sisera into the hands of a woman.” It is evident, therefore, that God had not only fixed the destruction of Sisera, but the exact mode in which that destruction should be effected : the faithlessness, or hesitation, of Barak was to be punished by the employment of a woman in the perfecting the great work of the deliverance of Israel. And when you combine this announced determination of God, that Sisera should fall by a female hand, with the approbation expressed of the conduct of Jael, we know not what conclusion you can form, except that Jael acted by Divine commission ; not from

revenge, or covetousness, or cruelty ; but altogether in obedience to an impulse, or precept, which she knew to be from above. She had probably acted from her natural feelings, when offering shelter to the fugitive, and giving him most hospitable entertainment. It was the dictate of a kindly spirit, that she should go out to meet Sisera, and endeavour to shield him from further injury. But when the deep slumber was upon him, there came an intimation to Jael—I cannot tell you how conveyed, but certainly in such a manner that there could be no doubt of its origin—an intimation from God, that her guest must die, and that, too, by her hand.

And if such were the case—and again we remind you that nothing but the Divine command will explain the Divine approval—we challenge you to find, in all the annals of Scripture, a mightier display of the power of faith than was exhibited by Jael. You are accustomed to admire Abraham, and to wonder at

the stern fortitude of the patriarch, as he stretches forth his hand to slay his son. You do not denounce him as a murderer, because you know that he was expressly commanded by God: you only applaud him as a marvellous proof, how a principle of duty may triumph over nature. And we call upon you to do precisely the same in reference to Jael. You have only to suppose that a Divine command existed in the one case as well as in the other, and the faith of Jael becomes, all things considered, as conspicuous as that of Abraham. We have referred already to the peril of the deed which this woman was directed to perform. What if Sisera should awake, just in time to discover and defeat the murderous design? It was likely. He seemed indeed in deep sleep. But, fresh as he was from the battle, his brain must be full of confused imagery; and the least noise would startle him, as though his foes were at the door. She had but a woman's hand, and a wo-

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man's strength—shall she dare to attempt the nailing the sleeping warrior to the earth? will not her courage fail her at the most critical moment, enough done to rouse Sisera, but not to overcome? And besides, why must she be the executioner? There was little probability that Sisera could escape. In a short time the pursuers must arrive; and then the foe of Israel would be slain without her interference. We can well believe that thoughts such as these crowded into Jael's mind. We can believe it was a moment of terrible perplexity, when she felt that she had received a commission from God, and considered the fearfulness of its execution. There must have been the natural shrinking from the shedding of blood. There must have been the cutting reflection that Sisera was her guest, and that she was pledged to his defence. There must have been dread of his revenge, if, as it would probably happen, she should betray her purpose, and falter

in its execution. But the faith of this woman triumphed over all that was most calculated to confound and dismay her. Like the patriarch Abraham, she staggered not through unbelief. And now, when she comes before you with the stealthy tread, and the hurried glance, and the implements of murder in her hands, you may shrink from her, as from a fierce vindictive being, bent upon slaughter, and steeled against pity. But I regard her with an amazement that approaches to veneration, because I feel that she is obeying a Divine command, when everything conspired to urge her to refuse: and as she plants the nail, and raises the hammer, and strikes the blow, I behold nothing but a marvellous, and almost unequalled victory of the principle of faith; and why, then, should I be surprised, if, when the deed is done, and Sisera slain, I hear it proclaimed by a voice from Heaven: "Blessed above women shall Jael be"—ay, blessed for the

very thing described in our text: "She went softly unto him, and smote the nail into his temples, and fastened it into the ground"?

There is yet another question which will suggest itself to your minds, of full as great importance as those already considered. You may perhaps be disposed to allow the extreme probability, if not the certainty, that Jael acted on a Divine command, conveyed to her after Sisera had been admitted to her tent; and you may, on this account, acquit her from the charges of treachery and cruelty. But then you will ask how it could consist with the character of God to issue such command: since murder is a crime which is expressly forbidden, with what propriety could He enjoin its perpetration? Now no one could have felt surprise, had Sisera perished in the battle: he was an oppressor of the Lord's people—what marvel then that he should be overtaken by vengeance? Thus also with the

Canaanites. Their wickedness marked them out for extermination, just as did that of the inhabitants of the world before the flood came. So that, if, in place of employing the sword of the Israelites, God had employed a deluge or pestilence, we should not have had a word to say, but must have admitted the justice of His ridding the land of those by whom it was profaned. And could either Jael or the Israelites be charged with murder, because performing by Divine command a just though severe action? They were only the executioners of a righteous sentence; and could they, on that account, contract guiltiness? When the law of the land has condemned a man to death, who thinks of charging the executioner with murder, because he is instrumental in executing the penalties of that law? Indeed, he as actually invades and rifles the sanctuary of life, as the midnight assassin who steals upon his victim, and leaves him weltering in his blood. But



because a competent authority has directed him to inflict death, he is no murderer, but only an obedient servant of the state, when he takes the life of a fellow-man. And surely if human authority can thus make it an innocent thing to take away life, Divine authority must be sufficient to effect no less. The Israelites were but executioners, commanded by God to put His sentence in force,—were they then murderers? Jael was but an executioner, directed by God to kill a condemned criminal; and can you charge her with blood-guiltiness because she did not refuse to obey the direction?

You may, no doubt, ask why God should have employed an instrumentality, which, if it did not cause guilt, is nevertheless so revolting to our feelings. We doubt your right to propose such a question; for you are bound to believe, that, whatever God does, He does in the best possible mode. But we need not content ourselves with this general statement.

We may find reasons, in the several cases to which we have referred, why that particular agency was used against which we feel disposed to object. In the instance of Abraham, it is seen at once, that the great ends, which were proposed, could not have been answered, had any other but the patriarch himself been directed to slay Isaac. The grand object appears to have been, to prove Abraham, and to teach him, through a figure, the mystery of redemption—an object which manifestly demanded that Abraham himself should slay his son. In the case of the Canaanites, undoubtedly God might have made use of plague or flood, in place of the sword of the Israelites, and have equally destroyed an execrated people. But the destruction would not have conveyed to surrounding nations so impressive a demonstration of the power of Jehovah. For the heathen estimated the might of their gods by successes gained in war ; and if one tribe subdued

another, the deities of the conquerors were reckoned superior to those of the conquered. Hence, as the God of Israel designed to read to every neighbouring people an intelligible lesson of His supremacy, He made the sword of His people irresistibly destructive ; and thus, by employing the battle rather than the pestilence, at once destroyed the wicked, and demonstrated His own greatness. And in the case of Sisera, Barak, as well as Jael, might have slain him ; or he might have fallen with his hosts on the plain of Zaanaim. But, as we before observed, God had a purpose of punishing the timidity of Barak, by taking from him the honour of completing the victory ; and therefore he employed the woman to do the work of the warrior. Thus, in each case, there is a reason to be given why God employed what we think the objectionable instrumentality, rather than some other which must have been equally at His disposal.

And this, we will venture to affirm, makes our argument complete. Let us briefly sum it up, so far as the instance of Jael and Sisera is concerned. It was just and righteous in God to determine that Sisera should die : Sisera had been the cruel oppressor of Israel ; and therefore was sentence passed against him by the Lord. The sentence having been passed, God had only to appoint an executioner ; and whosoever he might appoint, if acting only because thus appointed, would necessarily be blameless, nay, even praiseworthy, in the deed. He chose to appoint Jael—there being special reasons why this woman should be employed, rather than any other individual, whether male or female. And Jael had a hard task to perform, one demanding extraordinary faith and dependence upon God. But she performed it without flinching : she struck the nail, so that it entered into the very ground. And who then will deny, either that God did nothing at variance with the proper-

ties of His nature, or the precepts of His law, in commanding Jael to put to death her slumbering guest ; or that Jael, in place of our reproach and abhorrence, deserves our admiration and applause, as a mighty heroine, standing forth to execute the bidding of the Almighty, whatever the risk,—yea, who will deny that it was altogether to have been expected that Jael would be pronounced “blessed among women” for the very deed related in our text, when she “took a nail of the tent, and an hammer in her hand, and went softly unto Sisera, and smote the nail into his temples, and fastened it into the ground”?

Now it has been an endeavour to remove the objections which are frequently, we may even say naturally, made against that portion of Scripture which forms part of the lessons for the day. We are not aware that we have left any point untouched, on which a candid mind may be supposed to experience some perplex-

ity. We have laboured to show that Jael was no treacherous or blood-thirsty woman, but an intrepid and faithful servant of God, who shrank not from performing the Divine will, even when it required her to take the life of another, at the imminent peril of her own. And now, having vindicated Jael, we shall not hesitate to go further, and hold her forth as an example which it should be your effort to imitate. We do not merely mean, that, having displayed strong faith, and obeyed the Lord when obedience was beyond measure difficult, she has left a pattern to be followed by all who are summoned to special dangers and sacrifices in the service of God. Over and above this, the case of Jael and Sisera has a peculiar resemblance to that of many, yea, even all, amongst ourselves, who are required by God to inflict death where they have offered hospitality. Just consider that Jael was the friend of Sisera, but ought to have been his enemy. There

should have been no peace between the Kenites and the oppressors of Israel,—the foes of the Lord's people should have been also the foes of the kinsmen of Moses. And therefore Jael had received into her tent, and kindly entertained, one with whom it was wrong that she should be in alliance—she was bidden indeed to smite a companion—but a companion whom she ought long before to have shunned as an adversary. Is there no resemblance in this to our own circumstances and conduct? We ought to be at war with evil passions, with carnal desires, with sinful associates—but, in place of being at war, is it not true that we make a league, or strike an intimacy, and that we offer hospitality where we ought to draw the sword?

And is it not, therefore, yet further true, that the very thing which God demanded from Jael, he demands also from us—namely, that we smite that with which we are unlawfully at peace, and which is

sleeping, as it were, under the wing of our protection? Yea, if it be the Scriptural demand that we crucify—crucify, so as to employ the hammer and the nail—that we “crucify the flesh, with its affections and lusts”, then there is a vast similarity between our case and that of Jael. We too must put to death an enemy whom we have cherished and succoured. We too must determine that we will act the executioner, where we have been the patron and the host. We too must be ready to strike that which we have embraced, to pierce that which we have admitted, not only into our tent, but even into our heart. And therefore is Jael a great example to us, as she resolutely approaches the sleeping Sisera. As she adjusts the nail, and lifts the hammer, and destroys her guest, she does but represent to us how, in the power of faith, and in dependence upon God, we too should deal with favourite habits, chosen associations, and desired objects, whensoever it



can be proved that there is peace where there ought to have been war.

I counsel you, then, that you regard not the history, which we have been engaged in reviewing, as merely a strange narrative of heroism, if not of crime ; as only commemorating a bold deed, and a tragic occurrence. There is a Sisera in your own dwellings. There is an enemy with whom you have made a league—and whether it be a corrupt passion, a sinful compliance, a worldly practice, or a carnal pursuit, we demand from you the hammer and the nail, and tell you that to spare the foe is to kill yourselves. We ask from you the faith of Jael ; we ask from you the determination of Jael. We will hear nothing of the greatness of the effort, nothing of the peril, nothing of the close ties which bind you to an object. You cannot have as much to plead why you should not proceed to extremes with this or that opponent of your salvation, as Jael had why she should not smite Sisera. If

Christ require the cutting off a right hand, or the plucking out a right eye, whensoever it is the occasion of offence, it is manifest that the process of destruction is not to be arrested by the closeness of our connexion with that which God's Word hath devoted to death. The avenger of blood will be speedily upon us, just as Barak was speedily at the tent door of Jael. And if it shall appear that we have sheltered God's enemy, that we have spared the lust which we were commanded to destroy, that we have shrunk from driving the nail into the temples, because of the league between ourselves and our guest, oh, then we can only expect to be dealt with as Jael might have been dealt with, had she refused to kill Sisera, when bidden of God. There is a curse pronounced in the subsequent parts of the history, as well as that blessing upon Jael, whose justice it has been one chief object of our discourse to establish. There is a curse upon those who espoused the

cause of the adversaries of the Lord, or who declined to take part in their destruction. "Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof, because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty." Under such curse, such bitter curse, must all of us fall, if we will not be bold in endeavouring to exterminate the evil which has made its home in our hearts. But let there be this boldness, the hammer and the nail—oh, spare not an attachment because it is cherished, nor an affection because it is dear, if it seduce you from God—and over you shall be divinely breathed words, resembling those which were breathed over Jael, as she drove the nail into Sisera's temples: "Blessed above women shall Jael, the wife of Heber, the Kenite, be: blessed shall she be above women in the tent."

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## SERMON IV.

LADY-DAY, 1851.

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ST. JOHN, XIX, 25.

*Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother.*

It is both a common and a just remark, that, in avoiding one extreme, men are exceedingly apt to rush into the opposite. And the truth of this remark is certainly often exemplified by Protestants, who, in their zeal to shun everything which bears resemblance to Popery, may be said to reject not only error, but truth. They have so great, and so becoming, a dislike to the corruptions of the Roman Catholic Church, that they are disposed to look with suspicion even on what may be yet excellent in that body; and it is enough to say of a doctrine, that it is held by the Papists, to insure its being looked upon

with some measure of suspicion. We need not tell you, that there is more of partizanship in this than of the love of truth, more of prejudice than of principle. Forasmuch as the Roman Church was originally the pure Church, though now sadly debased and corrupted, we may expect to find in her tenets disguised and mutilated truth, as well as open and undeniable falsehood. Our business, therefore, is to endeavour to sift out the truth—not rashly concluding that what is found in Popery must be banished from Protestantism, but calmly investigating the grounds of every doctrine, trying it by Scripture and the judgment of the early Church, and accepting or rejecting according as these guides shall furnish a decision. Our Reformers acted in this respect with singular wisdom. They thoroughly felt that their business was not to construct a new Church, but to repair and restore an old, decayed in many parts, and buried under rubbish in more. And

they therefore proceeded, with a discretion and a singleness of purpose, for which we can never be sufficiently thankful to God, to reject whatever the Bible and antiquity did not sanction, and to retain whatever they did; feeling that their business was to wage war with error, and their danger, that, in rooting up the tares, they might root up also the wheat.

But whilst the Reformers were thus careful and judicious, they could not exterminate the spirit which dictated the indiscriminate censure of whatever was Papal. And the spirit still survives. For instance, the Roman Catholics give idolatrous honours to the Virgin Mary, imagining her without sin, addressing her as an object of worship, and applying to her, as an intercessor with her Son, or with God. The Protestant, on the contrary, justly and indignantly refuses to join in this blasphemous homage, regarding the mother of Christ as having been of the same corrupt nature with other daughters

of our race, and as having no power whatsoever of procuring for us benefits, whether spiritual or temporal. But is it not true, that, through fear of giving too much honour to the Virgin, Protestants, for the most part, give too little ; so that she is scarcely remembered in the Reformed Church, because sinfully revered in the Roman Catholic ? This has been through no fault of the Reformers themselves : for they did not fail to appoint services which might remind us of the mother of our Lord. But we have been so shocked at seeing Mary exalted by the Papists into a Mediator, endowed with Divine prerogatives, and crowned with Divine honours, that we have forgotten the claims which she really has on the affectionate homage of every believer in Christ. No eminent saint of whom we read, whether in the Old or New Testament, is perhaps so little thought of by us, or so little commended, as she whom the Angel Gabriel was commissioned to

address as “highly favoured”, “blessed among women”.

In proof of this, let me remind you that this is Lady-Day. Perhaps some of you are scarcely aware that Lady-Day is an appointed festival of our Church; that the Church directs us thereon gratefully to commemorate that great event, the Annunciation by an Angel to the Virgin Mary, that she should be miraculously the mother of the long-expected Messiah. The term Lady-Day perhaps suggests no idea but that of paying or receiving money: few remember that ecclesiastically the day is set apart to the celebration of one of the chief mysteries of our faith, with which indeed is bound up the whole sum and substance of Christianity. And although on most Sabbath evenings of the year we join in that beautiful hymn which commences, “My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour”, how seldom do we call to mind from whose lips the hymn



flowed : and when we utter the prophetic verse, "For, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed", oh, might not conscience well whisper to many of us, that our own forgetfulness of the Virgin Mary might be quoted in proof, that the prediction, after all, has failed to obtain a perfect fulfilment ?

Now, we are fast passing through the season of Lent, and approaching that solemn time when we are to accompany our Blessed Redeemer through the fearful scenes of his agony and passion. And in the midst of the weeks thus appropriated to acts of humiliation and penitence, when we ought to have continually before us the deep woes of our Saviour, as He wrought out our deliverance, we are interrupted by a summons to joy and gratulation : an angel descends to announce that the prophecy is about to be accomplished : "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel." There is something very touch-

ing in this meeting, so to speak, of the Church's anniversaries: joy and sorrow are singularly blended: one naturally thinks of what St. John states in describing the burial of Christ: "In the place where He was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new sepulchre"—a garden in the place of crucifixion, and a sepulchre in the garden; here we have life and death, gladness and grief, in much the same way combined, as in hours which bring with them the joyous salutation, "Hail, thou that art highly favoured", and the piteous lament, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" It should not be without emotions of delight, that we hear the announcement: "Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus": we feel that God is remembering His promise, and that ancient prophecy is about to find its fulfilment in the advent of the long-expected deliverer. But

then Lent, with its sackcloth and ashes, occurs to our remembrance ; and it can hardly be without emotions of pain and bitterness that we look on the meek, mysterious man, as an infuriated crowd hurry him to the place of execution, that we mark the buffetings and revilings to which he patiently submits, that, at last we behold him raised up, an ignominious spectacle, between earth and Heaven, and hear, not so much from the complaints of the innocent sufferer, as from the groans of the inanimate creation, the touching call, “ Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by ? Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of His fierce anger.” But whilst undoubtedly the meeting of anniversaries may thus demand from us a mixture of feelings—and, truly, what is there strange or unwonted in this ? of what is human life made up, if not of such meetings ? are not events so

blended, that we have constantly to smile through our tears, and to sing, at one and the same time, of mercy and of judgment?—whilst, we say, there might seem to be required from us opposite subjects of address, according as it be Lady-Day, or Lent, which we are considered as keeping, it may be possible to give due veneration to the Virgin Mother, and yet not abstract thought from the sufferings of the Son. Therefore, and with this double view, did we choose our present text. We shall glance but briefly at the Annunciation: we shall then consider whether the Virgin Mother of our Lord must not have lived the life of a martyr, according to the prediction of the aged Simeon: “Yea, a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also”; and we shall then accompany her to the eventful scene, her place in which is so simply, but touchingly, described by St. John in the words of our text: “Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother.”

Now, referring to our introductory remarks on the undue honour given by the Papists to the Virgin, it may be for your advantage to observe, that, in place of there being any sanction in Scripture for extraordinary honours rendered to the mother of our Lord, the weight of testimony is all the other way ; so that it would seem as if there had been a studied avoidance of representing her as an object of respect and veneration. We do not know, that, in any other particular, is the conduct of our Lord so little what we might have expected, or so hard to explain, as in his treatment of his mother. If you have read the Gospels attentively, you can hardly fail to have been struck with an apparent harshness, almost unkindness, in the deportment of Christ towards Mary. When, in his boyhood, he had tarried behind His parents in Jerusalem, and they, after seeking him with great anxiety, had found him in the Temple, you might have expected that the very

touching words of his mother, "Why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing"; would have produced from him some mild and soothing expression. But the answer is: "How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" Turn to the account of the marriage in Cana of Galilee. No doubt Mary presumed on her relationship to Christ, when she took upon her to mention the want of wine, and thus to hint at the propriety of a miracle being wrought. And indeed the early Fathers refer to the conduct of Mary on this occasion, as proving that, however excellent, she was not without sin, which is the doctrine or figment of the Roman Church. Yet, if Mary acted unadvisedly, or presumptuously, you would not perhaps have looked for so severe a rebuke as she received from her Son: "Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come." Thus again you read, that,

whilst Christ was teaching the people, he was told that his mother and brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him. In place, however, of paying attention to the communication, he merely took occasion to do, what, under the peculiar circumstances, almost looked like putting a slight upon Mary, to declare that his disciples, those who did the will of his Heavenly Father, stood to him in the position of mother and brethren. Very similarly, when a woman had exclaimed, "Blessed is the womb which bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked", our Lord replied, "Yea, rather, blessed are they which hear the Word of God, and keep it." Though there is no denial here of the blessedness of his mother, there is an evident assertion that it was not a blessedness which was widely to separate her from others of our race. So that it is hardly possible to deny that he who, on other occasions, and towards even his enemies, manifested a most gushing

tenderness,—nothing having been more observable in His conduct than generous sympathy and love,—did nevertheless behave towards his mother, if not with an appearance of harshness, at least with a studied determination not to make her the object of any special respect.

And it is worth remarking, that the disciples of Christ, so far as we can gather from their writings, pursued much the same course ; for Mary is only once mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, and not once in the Epistles ; and in this solitary instance she merely comes in with others : “ These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus.”

What are we to say to all this ? You cannot doubt that Christ, our example, as well as our teacher, in every other respect, must have given to his mother that honour and love which were due from a son ; and yet his registered conduct in



reference to Mary wears an appearance, which it is hard to remove, of unkindness and sternness. We believe that the most satisfactory account which can be given of this, is, that our Lord foresaw the idolatrous homage which, in progress of time, would be rendered to the Virgin, and determined that there should be nothing in his deportment, from which such homage might draw even the shadow of encouragement. You may all guess how the Romanists would have fastened even on the customary expressions of affection and esteem ; how they would have magnified every mark, had any been recorded, of honour paid to Mary by Christ and his Apostles. And it does seem to us to have been with the design of putting rebuke on those who would unduly extol Mary, that our Lord not only refrained from manifestations of reverence and love ; but even took, as it would seem, repeated occasions of treating her with what might have passed for severity and sternness.

The Papists indeed, in default of other Scriptural evidence, would make the words of the Angel, on the Annunciation which we this day commemorate, imply or involve an act of adoration of the Virgin. The words, as we translate them, are: "Hail, thou that art highly favoured". The Papists would translate them: "Hail, thou that art full of grace": and thus they make the salutation of the Angel the same with their "Ave, Maria", of which you must all have often heard, and the repetition of which is prescribed as a religious act of no ordinary worth. But, to say nothing of the absurdity of supposing that an angel would descend from Heaven, to offer adoration to a mere human being, Mary is evidently addressed as "full of grace", or "much graced", because honoured by being chosen, from all the daughters of Abraham, to give birth to the promised seed of the woman. It is not so much to the personal character of the Virgin, as to the dignity put upon

her by God, that the expression of the Angel refers; so that we may consider the celestial being as saying: Hail, thou that art highly honoured and favoured, as appointed to be the mother of the "desire of all nations".

And very great was the honour, and most meekly was it borne. If we can not join in the idolatrous homage of the Papist, unsanctioned as we thus shew it by Scripture, let us not fail to admire the humility and faith of the Virgin. You cannot need to be told how strong was the hope and desire amongst the Jewish women of giving birth to the promised Messiah. Hence it was that the being childless was accounted so terrible a calamity: she who failed to be a mother was shut out from the possibility of fulfilling the predictions with which stood associated all the glory of the nation. There was peculiar force in the words of our Lord, as applied to the daughters of Israel: "So soon as she is delivered of


the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world." The heart swelled with more than the emotions of a mother: "a man is born into the world"; and who shall say that the babe, which lies there in its helplessness, may not be that Mighty One, of whom prophets spake, and whom seers beheld afar off, the leader who is to break every yoke from the neck of Judea, and advance the seed of Abraham to universal dominion? And we may not doubt, that, in common with others of her sex and country, Mary longed to be the mother of the Messiah. Being herself of the lineage of David, and affianced to a man who was similarly descended, Mary may well have cherished a hope, that the promised Son of David would be her's. Yet no indulged hope could have been so strong as to have prepared her for the visit of the Angel. Accordingly, she is described as much troubled, when the radiant form stood before her, and announced that she

should be the mother of the Christ. And we do not suppose, taking all the circumstances into the account—the miracle of which she must be the subject, and the painful thoughts which may have crowded into her mind at being necessarily exposed to great suspicion and obloquy—that God had ever made a communication, the believing which required so vast an effort of faith. Surely the Virgin will express some hesitation, some fear, some anxiety. But no : it seems to have been enough for her that the message was clearly from above : without a pause, asking only one question, without a moment's reluctance, by a mighty act of faith, she took God at His word, expected its fulfilment, and left Him to make clear her innocence. She meekly said : “ Behold the handmaid of the Lord : be it unto me according to thy word.”

Take into account, as we have just said, all the circumstances, and there are not in the Bible more admirable words, words

more expressive of thorough acquiescence, of uncalculating submission, of unquestionable confidence. Ask me to point out a saint displaying extraordinary faith, and that, too, under circumstances most adapted to perplex and confound, and—considering the age, the sex, the condition—I would rather direct you to Mary, expecting her son Jesus, than to Abraham, offering up his son Isaac. No doubt, there is far less of apparent effort in the one case than in the other: there is not in the achievement of the Virgin the conspicuous courage and fortitude, which you mark in that of the Patriarch. But nevertheless, when you consider what the two were, what they had to believe, what to endure, you will hardly, we think, question the accuracy of the decision, that, in the secrecy of the Virgin's chamber, there was won a yet more signal moral triumph, than even on the summit of Moriah, when the father's hand was lifted up to slay the child of promise. And

Papists may offer extravagant and blasphemous homage to the Virgin—we will not join them in such offering: we would as soon render it to Abraham, to Moses, to Paul, to any of the worthies who signalized themselves by faith, and bequeathed their memories as a rich legacy to the Church. Such homage assumes, at the least, that Mary was free from all sin, thus making her birth as mysterious as that of her Son—whereas we unreservedly hold that in nothing was Mary distinguished from other women, but in superior sanctity, and stronger faith. But, if we cannot go with the Papist, we can yet yield due honour to the Virgin. We can signal her out from the throng of those, whose histories may put to shame our degenerate piety, and hold her up as worthy of a chief place in our commemorations, so long as fine heroism, and calm determination, and beautiful meekness, and lofty faith, can command the admiration of the disciples of Christ. For



in the account which has been read to you in the Gospel of the day, you have indications of a character, in which all that is most noble in intrepidity blended with all that is most graceful in humility, in which the firmness of the martyr combined with the timidity of the recluse, the confidence which can brave the frowns of the world with the sensitiveness which can shrink from a glance, the faith which counts nothing impossible to God with the gentleness which would not meet the least difficulty except in His strength. Yes, in her who could meekly bow the head at so amazing an announcement as the Angel had brought, leaving it with God to effect the miracle, send His Son through her into the world without spot of sin, and yet defend herself against obloquy and shame, you have the workings of a faith nobly adequate to such a life of distress and anguish as that of Mary must have been, a life which brought her at last to the unimaginable woe of the scene de-



scribed in our text: "There stood by the cross of Jesus his mother."

But are we right in supposing that Mary's life must have been one of great suffering, so that she is to be admired as a martyr, as well as for the manner wherein she received the announcement which the Church, on this day, commemorates? Now we have no direct information as to Mary's amount of knowledge, in regard to the office of that Being whom she had been privileged to bear. We cannot doubt that she recognized in him the promised Messiah, whom prophets and kings had longed to see, and with whose coming were bound up the most ardent hopes of her nation. But we may well doubt whether she had clearer views than others who saw in him the Christ, as to the nature of the work which He had undertaken upon earth. Simeon had spoken of him as a "light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel." But it is immediately subjoined:

“And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him.” They appear not to have been prepared for such a description of Christ’s office, and, when it was given, to have found it inexplicable. When Christ had made the answer already quoted, on being found with the doctors in the Temple, we read of his parents : “And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them.” Afterwards, indeed, we are told, “His mother kept all these sayings in her heart”: but whilst this proves that Mary pondered what she heard, laid it up as food for meditation, it does not shew that she attained to any accurate apprehension of the dread and solemn office with which Christ was engaged. We ought, perhaps, therefore to conclude, that, like the disciples of Christ, His mother had but erroneous and darkened notions of what Messiah had to do ; that, with them, her mind was confused by dreams of temporal sovereignty, and was

but ill prepared for the scorn and ignominy which entered so largely into his portion.

And who shall venture to tell us what the feelings of Mary must have been, as she saw her son, notwithstanding the miracles which he wrought, obtaining but few adherents, and those too from amongst the lowest of the people; centering gradually upon himself all the malice and power of an infidel nation, and at last delivered up to the Romans, and crucified as a malefactor? There is no need that we inquire whether there be truth in what some have said, that Mary was actually amongst those who died by the sword of persecution. Even as the whole life of the Redeemer, and not merely its last doleful scene, was but one act of martyrdom, because, from first to last, he was a "sign spoken against" by men, so may we affirm of Mary, that she must have been a martyr, from the moment at least when her Son entered on his ministry;

for, ever after, the contradiction of sinners waxed louder and louder: and what could it have been to the mother, if not a perpetually galling and lacerating thing, disappointing her most cherished expectations, and suggesting the most terrible fears? We must not judge of her merely as a mother—though, merely as a mother, who shall tell us the intenseness of her agony, as she saw the son of her affections “despised and rejected of men”, “a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief”?—we must remember that she was a mother as none other had ever been, none other shall ever be; so that it was the son of God Himself who had hung upon her breast, and she had thought herself privileged to give birth to one who was to lead Israel to triumph, whereas she now saw Israel consigning him to shame.

But without attempting to follow the martyr—for such we will call her, martyrdom having been as actual and as fierce

as in any more conspicuous case of physical torture—without attempting to follow her through her long series of endurances, let us accompany her to one scene, the scene to which Lent is introductory, the scene presented by the words of our text. It is the mount of Calvary to which we would lead you,—oh that ye may approach the place with broken and with contrite hearts. Behold the man! He has been scourged, buffeted, and spat upon: a purple robe has been put on him in mockery, and he has been crowned with thorns. Now he is brought forth, sinking beneath the weight of his cross: he is urged forward by the blood-thirsty multitude; and at length, painfully exhausted, yet uttering no word of reproach, he reaches the place of crucifixion. And now he is nailed to the cross, as it lies extended on the ground: then the whole is lifted up, so as to cause the sufferer the most excruciating torments; and still, though you might have thought that so

piteous a spectacle would have melted hearts of stone, he is "a sign that is spoken against"; "for all they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted in the Lord that He would deliver him: let Him deliver him, seeing he delighted in Him". But some there are, even amid that infuriated multitude, who are sorely stricken at the sufferings of this innocent victim. The eye of the Redeemer seems to fix on two weeping figures,—who are these who can engage his attention at such a moment of unutterable anguish, unutterable achievement? What can draw off his mind, we will not say from the contemplation of his unexampled endurance, but from that of the stupendous results which are about to follow from the awful sacrifice, the reconciliation of the whole world to God, and the opening of the kingdom of Heaven to all believers? These are his mother, and John, the beloved disciple. Love was

stronger than courage ; or, rather, love inspired courage. The weak woman, and the apostle of tenderness, these stood close by the cross, when the rash and the daring had fled. Oh, who shall tell us what that mother felt ? who shall describe what her emotions would have been, even had she thoroughly known what her Son was accomplishing by death ? how much less, what they must have been, when possibly she saw nothing in his death but the destruction of her fondest and most precious hopes ? She has waited at the foot of the cross, eager to catch the last looks, and the last words, of him, whom it is little to say she loved with more than woman's love—so mysterious and awful must have been her affection ; and now the fearful tragedy is almost at a close, and the dying man has not seemed to notice her presence. But then it is that Jesus, seeing “ his mother, and the disciple standing by whom he loved”, saith unto his mother, “ Woman, behold

thy son : then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother."

I hardly know whether even these words do not corroborate what we before advanced as to a studied carefulness, on the part of Christ, to avoid giving ground for any undue homage to the Virgin. You could scarcely have been surprised, had our Lord endeavoured to cheer, by a few kindly expressions, the weeping being who had borne him, and who now stood, in unutterable grief, at the foot of his cross. But we will not insist on this. We will only ask you whether you think that the words actually spoken could have been words of comfort to Mary? Indeed they are exquisitely beautiful, as proving the thoughtfulness of Christ for his mother, when you might have supposed him so occupied with his mighty undertaking on behalf of this Creation, as to have had no moment to give to a sorrowing individual. Yet, if ever words went cuttingly to a human heart, these must



have been as a sword to that weeping woman. If she had entertained a lingering hope that Christ would yet triumph over his enemies, and remain to bless his friends, these words must have destroyed it. For, by providing for her, so to speak, another son, committing her to the care of another, did not Christ tell her, but too clearly and emphatically, that she was losing him altogether; that, even if he rose from the dead, it would not be to renew the sweet intercourses of earthly affection? Yet, the last words which Christ addressed to his mother, though we may allow them to have been words overflowing with tenderness, must have cut that mother to the quick. And we need adduce nothing further in evidence that Mary herself may justly be regarded as having had martyrdom to undergo, at least at the awful time of our Lord's crucifixion; and that, as we admired her for the faith and the meekness wherewith she received the announcement that the

Christ should be her son, so ought we to admire in her the courage and the constancy of one who is led up to the scaffold, or fastened to the stake, as a confessor for God and for truth, when we read the simple, plaintive, statement of our text : “ Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother.”

But let us not conclude our attempt to blend into one subject of discourse the event, which Lady-Day commemorates, and the events to whose anniversaries Lent is introductory, without observing the connexion between the two, and the indispensableness of the one in order to the worth of the other. It is virtually to contend for all that is distinguishing in Christianity, for all that makes Christianity something more than natural religion, with only a higher toned morality, and loftier sanctions, to contend that our Saviour, though born of a woman, had no human father. On the truth of the announcement, made, as on this day, by the

Angel Gabriel to Mary, depends the virtue of the sacrifice offered by Christ upon Calvary. The question involved in this truth, is the question of the perfect purity of Christ Jesus as man—not the question of his freedom from actual sin, but the question of his freedom from original sin—not the question, whether he ever yielded to corrupt inclinations, but the question, whether he possessed any corrupt inclinations: and if you know anything of the scheme of our redemption, you must know that the one of these questions is to the full as important as the other; that, if there could be fastened on the Mediator the slightest taint—though it were only a taint derived from the guilt of a forefather, and never suffered to communicate the least taint to the practice—there is an end at once to the doctrines of a meritorious obedience, and an expiatory sacrifice: we are left to make our own peace with God, and without one jot of power for the making it. But with the

assurance that our Lord and Saviour was “conceived of the Holy Ghost”; that the “Word was made flesh” by a miraculous act; and that therefore Christ, though “man of the substance of his mother”, and deriving from her the innocent infirmities of our nature, derived none of its sinful propensities—oh, we can feel that he was indeed “a lamb without blemish and without spot”; we can build with thorough confidence on the doctrine that “He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.” Lady-Day supplies what is wanting to make Good Friday, for which Lent is preparing us, of any avail; and the having to turn thought on both anniversaries at one and the same time, does but remind us of the combination of facts, the perfect purity of the human nature of Christ, and therefore its perfect fitness to be presented as an offering for the sins of the world. Depart, then, from the House of God, rejoicing that the prophecy was fulfilled: “Behold, a virgin shall conceive,

and bear a son"—yet smiting on your breasts in deep repentance of the wickedness which could only be expiated by the death of one whose birth proved him to be the Son of the Highest.

But take also another lesson. Mary, no doubt, had poverty to struggle with: she was not placed in any conspicuous post, where great things were to be done or endured for God. Yet living a lowly life, performing the every-day duties which devolve on the members of straitened families, duties on which there is nothing to throw splendour, and which seem little favourable to deep spirituality, did Mary grow so rich in the graces of piety as to be fitted for the highest honour which God had in store for woman. After this, let no one repine at not being called to eminent station, as though it were necessary to be great in office, in order to the being great in the virtues or rewards of religion. The highest rewards may be missed by those who have the

highest duties to perform, and obtained by those who have the lowest. Oh then, labour, all of you, diligently in your appointed spheres, content, if it be God's will, to pass through life insignificant and unknown, but animated by the blessed assurance that you may shine hereafter as stars in the firmament, and receive a crown which fadeth not away.

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## SERMON V.

SEEKING GOD EARLY.

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PROVERBS, VIII, 17.

*I love them that love me, and those that seek me  
early shall find me.*

I WOULD not that the young amongst my hearers should pass through this season of Lent, without receiving some word of exhortation, more especially adapted to their circumstances. My present sermon shall, therefore, in a great degree, be adapted to the young, though not in such measure as to pass by other classes. The text presents evidently appropriate topics. We shall not preface our discourse on these words, with any examination as to who the speaker is by whom they are uttered. The general opinion of the Church has been, that it is Christ, the everlasting Son of the Father, who, un-

der the personification of the Divine wisdom, speaks throughout this eighth chapter of the Book of Proverbs. We shall assume, without hesitation, that it is a person of the Godhead who here addresses the children of men ; but our statements will not be affected by whether it be the first or the second.

We ought however to remark, since we have chosen the text on account mainly of its suitableness to the young, that there is but one word in the Hebrew, answering to the two "seek early" which occur in our translation. Possibly the version might not be incorrect, if it stood, "Those that seek Me shall find Me"; and then we should have the same truth expressed, only with less limitation, no season being given as more favourable to seeking than another. Still, in the judgment of eminent critics, the single Hebrew word does not so much denote seeking in general, as seeking at the dawn or beginning of a day. And our translators would there-



fore appear to have been justified in adding the word "early", and thus not making the promise so general as to contradict, which it certainly then would, other portions of Scripture. For if it were unreservedly declared that those who seek God shall find Him, we should have difficulty in explaining passages which represent God as withdrawing Himself from those who are only driven to the inquiring after Him by some great emergency; and excuses might be formed from the declaration, for postponing to a more convenient season attention to the high duties of religion. We shall, therefore, consider that the word "early" has been rightly introduced, so that the promise in question belongs especially to the young, to whom, as we have stated, it is now our wish more particularly to speak.

Let us begin then with noting the assertion, "I love them that love Me". It might be inferred from such words, that man must love God, as a preliminary

or condition to God's loving man. If none but those who love God are to obtain the love of God, you might argue that it is on man's side that love first begins, and thus represent the love of God as itself an effect rather than a cause. Whereas we are assured that the very reverse is matter of fact; that God's love of man must in every case precede man's love of God, yea, be, in some way or another, its chief producing cause. It is the express assertion of St. John, "We love Him, because He first loved us". And indeed, had not God loved us as enemies, loved us when there was nothing upon earth but hostility towards Himself, it is very evident that there would never have been the great scheme of redemption: that scheme originated in God's love for the world: the Scriptural account is, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life".

Neither is it only as the originating cause of our redemption, that we may refer to Divine love as preceding all human. There is no natural power in men of loving God ; and even when St. John gives God's first loving us as the producing cause of our loving God, the saying is not to be interpreted as though manifestations of Divine kindness wakened naturally in our hearts emotions of affection. Indeed, you cannot be ignorant how commonly it is thought that God is too great, and too far removed, to be an object of love: those who will own all His goodness, as exhibited, in a thousand ways, in the visible creation, will yet represent Him as to be revered or feared, but will regard His being loved as the suggestion only of presumption, or as belonging only to an unattainable piety. If you speak of what takes place between man and man, there is confessedly a power in bestowed benefit, and exhibited kindness, of producing attachment: it has passed

into a proverb, that love begets love ; and there are few who can feel indifferent to those who are manifesting towards them a watchful affection. And therefore the love of one may be given as the cause of the love of another, on the principle that the consciousness of being the object of regard, has a direct tendency to the generating regard ; that to speak of loving another, because he first loved us, is only to assign manifestations of good will as possessed of a native power of exciting good will.

But there is an end of all this usual process, when the benevolent party, the party fraught with affection, is not man, but God. There is not one of you who can look abroad upon the landscape, or consider the succession of seasons, or observe the abounding provision for every living thing, without acknowledging the workings of infinite benevolence. He cannot recount the incidents of a single day, without testifying to a gracious and

ever active Providence. But, nevertheless, it is not true of any one of you, that he will love God, just because every thing around proves that God loves him. It would seem as if all that susceptibility, which is in vigorous play whilst a fellow-creature manifests kindness, were destroyed so soon as the Creator comes forward to load with benefits: there is no answering emotion, no awakened sensibility: and if it be because God hath first loved us, that we are brought to love God, the expression must be differently understood from when applied to a case of mere human attachment. And the truth is, that our love of God is nothing else but the reflection of God's love to us: it is in no sense an earthly production, but is heavenly every way, birth, and nurture, and end, and feature. God must first love us, so as not merely to surround us with mercies, and not merely to make arrangements which render possible our salvation, but so as to enter

into our souls, and there reimpress His own image, producing, what we naturally have not, a sense of His love, and thus exciting our love in return. As we breathe, because God hath breathed into us the breath of life, we love, because God hath kindled in us the flame of affection; so that there can be no genuine love of God, except as a result of the renewal of nature; and when we love Him, it is because He hath made us in a measure like Himself, destroyed the native enmity, and implanted feelings which tend upwards, as to their centre and their home.

And we are very anxious that you should rightly understand what produces love of God, that you may not think to produce this love in yourselves, without reference to His converting and renovating grace. You cannot make yourselves love God: it is God alone Who can make you love God: and when it is said that He loves them that love Him, you must

not suppose that a condition is given, which you are to perform in order to attract towards you His love: it is only meant, that those who yield to the affectionate solicitations which He is continually addressing to all, and open to Him the hearts at which He perpetually knocks, become thereby objects of His peculiar regard, and are beloved as children who have returned to His embrace. He loves us before we love Him; and if there were not His love to originate, in every sense, ours, there is no human being who would ever feel towards Him as a son to a father. But when we answer to His love, becoming new creatures through obeying the motions of His Spirit, and therefore having the affections purified and rectified, so that they fasten themselves once more on the infinite and invisible, then, as though He had not loved us before, so endearing is the relationship into which we are brought, He speaks in the language of the text, "I love them that love

Me.” And you are not to content yourselves with the fact that God loves you : you must see whether it be with the love of which those are the objects who also love God. For the love, of which you are the objects whilst you do not love God, is indeed a wonderful love—witness the broad canopy which it hath irradiated above you ; witness the rich carpet which it hath spread upon the earth ; witness the death of the Redeemer ; witness the hope of immortality. Yes, a wonderful love : but we will tell you in what most wonderful, according to the conception of such creatures as ourselves—in that it can permit the misery, the everlasting misery, of those on whom it has been fixed, but in whom it has failed to excite love in return. And assuredly this will not satisfy you. You must wish to be so loved as to be saved ; and that love it is which is promised in our text.

But how is this to be attained ? We



cannot make ourselves love God : of what use then is it to urge on us whether the duty or the advantage of giving Him our hearts? Ah, let the young, especially, take heed how they urge the safety of doing nothing, from what they hear as to their not having the power in themselves. I know that you cannot make yourselves love God. But you may think over the proofs of His love. You may do as you would towards a human parent, if you felt that you were deficient in affection,—recount the acts of tenderness, the benefits, and indulgences, which you had received ; and reflect on your baseness, your ingratitude, in not requiting such love with love. You are just in the position, with regard to your heavenly Father, in which a child would be with respect to his earthly, if he were removed out of his sight, and placed amongst strangers, to whom he was tempted to give all his heart. What could he do, to preserve or recover in himself due affection for his

parents? Why, he might dwell on many proofs of tender and unwearied love. He might recall the instructions which he had received, all eloquent of patient solicitude; the morning and the evening prayer; the smile which was on the father's face when he did right, and the tear which was in the mother's eye when he did wrong. He might think on the parting scene, and the parting blessing, which was looked rather than spoken—so full were the hearts of his parents; and he might handle the little mementos of the home and the friends he was leaving—perhaps the portrait of a mother, perhaps a Bible inscribed by a father; and he might read, again and again, the letters which had followed him to a far land, assuring him that many and fond thoughts were given to the absent, and commending him to that Providence which gathers alike all countries under its guardianship.

There might be much the same process

in regard of your Heavenly Father. You may think of the unnumbered blessings received at God's hands. You may call to mind how He has watched over you, and borne with you, and laboured to bring you to Himself. You may look at His picture, as enamelled in the verdure, or outlined by the stars. You may read His letters, letters written in the blood of His Son Jesus Christ, all assuring you of the tenderness of His love, and of His longings for your everlasting happiness. We can believe that a child, who carefully recalled, as we have here described, the sweet images of home, would find affection towards his parents revived or invigorated. And though we do not say that your doing what we have mentioned with reference to God will make you love God, we can feel that you would thereby be putting yourselves in the way of receiving those influences which can alone change the heart. It could hardly fail, but that, from thinking over the proofs continually

received of God's love, from surveying and handling the mementos of more than parental tenderness with which you are surrounded, you would be led to reproach yourselves for your indifference towards God; and that then you would be conscious of an impulse to prayer, prayer which is the child's letter to our Father that is in Heaven: and oh, if you be only brought, in a spirit of contrition for past neglect, to beseech God to take away the heart of stone, and give that of flesh, you will not be "far from the Kingdom of Heaven"; you will not be far from being numbered with those who may draw comfort from these beautiful words: "I love them that love me."

But we will now turn to the other clause of my text, which is yet more distinctly addressed to the young, or which intimates that their's is the period of life at which God may successfully be sought: "Those that seek me early shall find me." We do not argue from this, that, if God

have not been sought early, it is in vain to seek Him late. God may have been forgotten in youth and in manhood: even old age may have come on an individual, and found him unmindful of his Maker: but we still exhort him to seek, and we still tell him that it is not impossible but what he may find. But, nevertheless, the explicit promise is to them that seek God early; and we may not therefore doubt that there are advantages to those who begin in their youth, which will always widely remove their case from that of others who give their first years to the world. It is not needful, however, that we should confine ourselves strictly to the exhibiting this truth. It rather becomes us to array before the young the motives which should conspire to the urging them to an immediate attention to the things which belong unto their peace, that so they may, if possible, be brought to the seeking God early, and therefore to the finding Him, according to His promise.

And first we must notice the acknowledged, though practically forgotten fact, that the life of the young is as uncertain as that of the old, and that health and strength are no security against the speedy approaches of death. God calls upon you, accordingly, to seek Him early, that is, now. But why now? Why not after a little longer forgetfulness, after a little more time given to the amusements of the world? Why, but because many of you have seen brothers or sisters taken away, whose prospect of life was at least as good as their own? Why, but because all of you, if you will go into churchyards, and read the inscriptions on tomb-stones, may learn that, from the infant of a day to the veteran of a hundred years, there is the same exposure to death, so that no age gives exemption, just as no rank? And therefore you are to seek God early, to seek Him, that is, now;—now is the only moment of which you can be sure; and shall you not give the only moment

of which you can be sure, to the only work which it is indispensable you should perform ?

It is thus on the uncertainty of life that we ground our first argument, in proving to the young the importance of their acting on the precept, which is conveyed through the promise of the text. And yet we almost despair of working on them by any such argument. We cannot hide from ourselves, that liability to death is so common-place a topic, that it can hardly be so treated as to arrest men's attention. Indeed it is common-place ; but, because common-place, important and awful. We must ply the young with the argument, whatever our fears that they will not allow it due weight. You cannot be certain that you have another day to live. I have seen, and every minister may have seen, young persons on the Sabbath full of health and strength, and, before the next Sabbath, been called on to see them die. And if this may be, will you run the risk

of dying without having sought God? Will you dare to take the chances, and defer attention to religion, when you know that it is eternity which is at stake, and that you are hazarding on a breath your everlasting portion? Oh, let not the shades of those who have died young hover round you in vain. Let not the voices of the many, who daily perish in their prime, admonish you in vain. Let not the tears of fathers and mothers, following their children to the grave, be poured forth in vain. You have no charter of exemption, no monopoly of life. The pining consumption, the fierce fever, the fatal accident, these have reaped vast harvests amongst those of your own age, and, still insatiable, are craving new victims. And therefore be ye warned to do that at once which delay may prevent your being able to do at all. Be ye not guilty of the incalculable folly of thinking that it will be time enough, when you are a little older, to give heed to the salvation



of the soul ; whereas you may be already on the border line of life, with only a step between yourselves and death. Oh, rather determine, in the strength of the living God, that you will instantly abjure the fascinations of a world that lieth in wickedness ; that you will devote yourselves to prayer, to the study of the Scriptures, to the practice of Christian duties ; for there is a summons from our churchyards, crowded with the young, from the Heaven that is above, which has gathered into its bosom many who had not numbered more years than yourselves, and from the hell that is beneath, whose torments have overtaken many who seemed as secure as you of lengthened days ; and this summons urges you to seek God at once : this summons is but the echo of our text : “ They that seek me early shall find me.”

But it would be a great mistake, were you to think that immediate attention to the duties of religion is desirable only because life is uncertain. If you could get

quit of the likelihood of dying young, and could insure yourselves many years upon earth, we should press on you with the same earnestness the early seeking of the Lord. It is upon this that the text is most emphatic ; for if it do not exclude those from the possibility of finding who only seek late, at least it distinctly implies that they will have much greater difficulty than had they sought early. We are well aware what feeling is uppermost in the minds of the young, when they think they may safely reckon on long additions to life. It seems to them as though no harm could arise from delay, and they might, with perfect safety, enjoy the world a little longer, tasting more of its pleasures, before giving themselves to what they falsely call the austerities of religion. Indeed, if such be your description, you reckon in utter ignorance of the real state of the case. You suppose that one time will be as fitted as another, late as early, for seeking the Lord ; and that, provided

you live, repentance will be as much within your power twenty or thirty years hence as it is now. But this is a supposition for which there is no warrant. I am always much struck by the saying of an old writer: "God has indeed promised that He will, at all times, give pardon to the penitent; but I do not find that He has promised that He will, at all times, give penitence to the sinful." And you cannot repent, except through the grace and Spirit of the Almighty—which grace, and which Spirit, though now ready to assist you, may be withheld from you hereafter, and probably will be, if you insult God by an actual determination of giving the best years of life to the world, and then the dregs to Him. By continuing in sin, you form habits which will strengthen into task-masters, and which, when you are old, will be well-nigh irresistible. You grieve and quench that Holy Spirit, without which it is as impossible for you to turn unto God, as for the

dead body to perform the functions of the living. You store up a seared conscience, and a hardened heart, and all the material of insensibility, for the very time at which you purpose to be in earnest in religion.

We despair not, as we before hinted, of any man at any age. We preach the Gospel, we offer forgiveness, to the grey-headed as well as the stripling, to those who, at most, can have but few sands in the hour-glass, as well as to others who may probably, as yet, have the great mass unexhausted. But we cannot conceal from ourselves how small is the likelihood of our producing any moral impression on those who have grown old in forgetfulness of God. We know not so unpromising a subject of moral attack as an aged sinner, always supposing him to have heard the Gospel in his youth. In pleading with him, we have to plead against habits which have become part of his nature, to act on a conscience which has been so long torpid that it seems incapable of being

roused, and to excite affections, of which, for years, there has been so little exercise that we might almost doubt the existence. And it is the growing into this morally withered and deadened estate, which the young amongst you dare to propose, when deferring to after years the turning into the paths of wisdom and righteousness. We therefore plead against the resolution, not only by the probabilities of an early death and a disastrous eternity. We are not satisfied with calling up the multitudes of those who have perished in their prime, and who, therefore, warn you of the madness of expecting long life. We give you all the benefit of the supposition, that you will reach the fulness of manhood, and even pass through it to old age. But we meet you, in the evening of your days, when the gathering gloom, and the lengthening shadows, incontestibly prove that the night is at hand. And there we find you so confirmed in worldly-mindedness, so impervious to attack, so inveterate

in the love and practice of evil, so enfeebled by the indulgence of your passions, so incapacitated for every work of self-denial, that preaching to you seems like preaching to the stone, and nothing but the compulsion of duty can bind us to a task apparently hopeless. The grave then, hollowed out for the youthful, has a startling and piercing voice: but so also has old age, the very season which you think to devote to the great business of religion—yea, old age calls to you, by its shattered powers, by its crushed affections, by its tottering limbs, by its apathy, by its insusceptibility to moral impressions, Seek ye the Lord whilst ye may yet seek Him early; for indeed it may well come to pass that those only who seek Him early shall find Him.

We would yet further observe, in confirmation, or for illustration, of this latter argument, that, when the wise man elsewhere calls on you to remember your Creator in the days of your youth, he

adds: "When the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when Thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." We need hardly tell you, that, as men grow old, they gradually lose the relish for those enjoyments which have fascinated them in youth; so that they outlive the pleasures for which they have been content to hazard immortality. The craving indeed will sometimes survive the power; and then we have the degraded and melancholy exhibition of a human being hankering after gratifications in which he can no longer participate, haunted by the memory of past indulgences, but unable to taste again the cherished delights. And, in all cases, we may affirm of the old age of the sensual and the worldly, that it is made up of years of which they might say: We have no pleasure in them. They are years in which, according to the striking figures which Solomon employs, "the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men bow themselves, and the

grinders cease, because they are few, and those that look out at the windows are darkened"—when, that is, the limbs and the various bodily organs can no longer perform their parts, so that the inlets and instruments of worldly pleasure cease to be available.

And is this a season to devote to religion? What! will you be vicious so long as you have the power, and virtuous only when that power is destroyed? Will you cling to the world whilst you can enjoy it, and give it up only when you cannot relish its delights? Is it not to insult God, as we have already said, to offer Him the miserable remnant of a life which you have kept from Him so long as it was possible to devote it to His enemies? It is virtually what is so indignantly reprobated in the prophecies of Malachi: "If ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy Governour: will He be pleased with thee,



or accept thy person?" What would it be but a just judgment on any one of you, who may resolve to give his best years to the service of sin, intending to repent and seek God in the closing days of life—what would it be but a just judgment, if God were utterly to refuse the worthless and compulsory oblation, rejecting with loathing and scorn the dedication of days which had been offered to the world, but which the world would not have? The demand upon us is, that we give up, that we surrender, something for God. But nothing is given up, nothing is surrendered, if we defer religion till the years come in which we are forced to say that we "have no pleasure in them". And therefore you must seek God early, whilst there is a sacrifice to be made, whilst there are passions which may be mortified, advantages which may be resigned, pleasures which may be abandoned. It is not that any surrender which you make can deserve God's favour; but it is that you

may expect to find that favour withheld, if not sought till you have nothing to resign which can stand in competition.

We counsel you then, again and again, to begin at once, without an hour's delay, to devote yourselves to the duties of religion. Give God the prime of your strength, the flower of your days, the vigour of your intellect, the ardency of your affections. And think not that we urge you to the exchanging what is cheerful and pleasant for what is austere and repulsive. In admonishing you to seek God early, we require you to give up no indulgence which can be reflected on without remorse, and to perform no task which will not leave a sense of satisfaction. We invite you to the only happiness which will bear the being examined, to the so living that you may not fear to die. We wish that we could speak more powerfully, more persuasively, to the young. We desire, on their behalf, that they may repay the anxieties, the

prayers, and the tenderness, of their parents, by living as children of God, and seeking the Lord, as did Samuel and Timothy, whilst their days are yet in their freshness. Some of the young whom I address may be orphans ; others may still have a home which is gladdened by the presence of a father or a mother. Whether you are yet privileged with the counsel of parents, or have nothing left you but the memory, the hallowed memory, of those who gave you birth, be ye sure that the best recompense you can make for unwearied watchfulness in infancy, for kindness when you could show no gratitude, for love when you could make no return, as well as for all the care and cost bestowed on the matter of your education, is the remembering your Creator in the days of your youth. He is unworthy the name of a parent, who would not feel it an abundant requital for every toil endured, and every sacrifice made, on behalf of a child, if he saw that child

walking in the ways of religion ; and therefore you do the best, which children can do, towards returning the benefits of which they have been the objects, when you labour to keep God's commandments, and to love that good Shepherd who gave his life for the sheep. Would that all in this assembly might be enabled to take comfort from the words, " I love them that love me " : would that the young, more especially, might be animated by the promise, " They that seek me early shall find me " .

And yet, for a few moments, let me speak more definitely to those whose circumstances may expose them to special temptations. I know—who can be ignorant of?—the dangers which environ young men who are sent to make their way in this enormous metropolis. Alas ! what facilities and incentives are there to every species of vice. Alas, also, what lessons in scepticism, and unblushing infidelity. We have even more dread of

the latter than of the former. We know that there is no foundation for morals but religion—every other is but the baseless dream of a philosophy as shallow as it may be showy. If then we can but bring you to feel that you have souls, to remember that you must stand at the judgment seat of Christ, to act under a consciousness that God always sees you, and registers each particle of your conduct, the greatest way will be made towards securing that resistance to the allurements of sin, that faithfulness in duty, and that submission to authority, which we look for from those born of Christian parents, and brought up in Christian principles.

Be heedful, therefore, both the younger and the elder, how you make light, or think little, of religion. You may have ability, you may have attainments: but do not imagine that you are thereby excused from attention to religion, as though religion were only fit for those of weak

mind, or deficient acquirement. The idolatry of intellect is one of the foul and fatal faults of the day. Know ye that a man's intellect furnishes no apology, or makes no amends, for his irreligion: talent, joined with sensuality, or linked with impiety, is but talent desecrated and debased: it may throw a false lustre over its vile associate, but it makes itself contemptible and hateful—contemptible, as the prostitution of one of God's best gifts; hateful, as an engine for God's worst foes. See to it then, that ye be not ashamed of religion, that ye think it not manly, the proof of a free and disencumbered spirit, to sneer at or despise religion. It is the petty, the dwarfish, the ill-balanced mind, which can make light of the awful God, of eternity with its tremendous realities. Come anything amongst us rather than this, rather than the levity of the scorner, than the cold, hard, boldness of the sceptic. And that the young, who are exposed to the perils of this great city, may

not lapse into so fearful a state, be ye advised to give heed to religious duties without delay and in good earnest: no neglecting prayer, no failing to read God's Word, no turning the back, when the proper age is reached and the opportunity offered, on that most blessed ordinance, the Holy Communion of the Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ: but seek God at once; seek Him in dependence on his promise—for "Heaven and earth may pass away, but my word", saith Christ, "shall not pass away"—seek Him in dependence on his promise, "They that seek me early shall find me".

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## SERMON VI.

### THE CEDAR AND THE FIR.

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ZACHARIAH XI, 2.

*Howl, fir-tree; for the cedar is fallen.*

THERE is little debate that the prophecy, of which these words are a part, had its fulfilment in the destruction of Jerusalem, and the dispersion of the Jews, by the Romans. You will easily understand how the text would become applicable at a time of great national calamity. By the cedar-tree we may consider that the chief men of a country are represented, those who occupy the more prominent positions, and are conspicuous by station and influence. And when the cedar-tree falls, when the princes of a land are brought down by disaster and death, men of inferior rank, who, in comparison with



those princes, are but as the fir-tree, compared with the cedar, may well tremble and fear, as knowing that their own day of trial must be rapidly approaching.

“Howl,” then, “fir-tree, for the cedar is fallen.” Such words, as you must perceive, are universally applicable whenever calamity falls on those better, or more exalted, than ourselves, and such calamity may serve as a warning, teaching us to expect our own share of trouble. This is the use which we design to make of the passage on the present occasion. We will separate the words altogether from their original scope or design, and simply treat them as an admonition to those who, from inferiority in station or character, may be likened to the fir-tree, that they gather a solemn lesson from what may be seen befalling others more excellent than themselves, the cedar-trees in the plantation of God. “Howl, fir-tree”—tremble and be afraid, ye sinful and careless ones, who, though planted in the garden of the

Lord, bring not forth the fruits of righteousness: "the cedar is fallen"—sorrow and trouble come upon the true and faithful servants of the Most High, those trees which yield most return to the labours of the husbandmen—shall, then, the fir-tree escape? Shall not its boughs be riven, and shall not its leaves be scattered? Nay, as the Apostle asks, "If judgment first begin at the house of God, what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of Christ?" The "house of God" here evidently answers to the cedar in our text: those that obey not the Gospel, to the fir-tree; and the question as to what the latter may expect, when judgments overtake the former, has manifestly the same meaning and force as the summons of our text, "Howl, fir-tree; for the cedar is fallen". St. Peter adds another question, which still further illustrates his own meaning, and that of the words under review: "And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly

and the sinner appear?"—which you might throw into the form, "if the cedar-tree be shaken, so as almost to be destroyed, what fate shall the fir-tree experience?"

Thus we may fairly take our text as setting forth the sufferings of the righteous as an evidence or token of the far greater which, in due time, must be the portion of the wicked. And we doubt whether any argument, or exemplification, ought to be more convincing. If the wicked were to ponder God's dealings with the righteous; if the fir-tree would observe what is done to the cedar; it could hardly be that future and everlasting punishment would be denied by any, or by any be practically disregarded. And this it is which we desire, on the present occasion, to set clearly and forcibly before you. Without proposing any particular plan or arrangement of discourse, we proceed at once to the considering, in the more obvious instances, what happens to

the cedar ; and to the pressing home on you, in each case, the emphatic remonstrance : “Howl, fir-tree ; for the cedar is fallen.”

Now let our blessed Saviour himself be the first cedar-tree on which we gaze—a cedar-tree “smitten of God and afflicted” ; for he was “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” We wish you to set in contrast the holiness and the sufferings of the Mediator ; the holiness such that “he did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth” ; the sufferings such that “his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men.” You must be perfectly sure, that, if virtue and piety be acceptable with God, there never moved the being on this earth who could have been so much the object of Divine favour as Christ, never one for whom it might so justly have been expected that there would have been exemption from at least extraordinary trouble. And you must be ready to admit that it

would be utterly inexplicable, why he who was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners", should have been given up by God to execration and death, if we did not know that he was the appointed representative of a guilty race; so that he was a mark for the arrows of Divine wrath, because standing, of his own accord, as surety for a lost world. But even when we have brought into the account the expiatory nature of Christ's sufferings, those sufferings lose nothing of their awfulness as indications of God's hatred of sin. If we were either ignorant of the great doctrine of the atonement, or inclined to question its truth, we should have no satisfactory explanation to offer of the endurances of our Lord. And when we are acquainted with, and acknowledge, this doctrine, we are, indeed, no longer at a loss to account for the permitted sufferings of Christ: but still those sufferings are only then assuming their most striking character, as demonstrations of the evil of sin.

It is upon this character that we now wish to fasten. If there be one amongst you inclined to think lightly of sin, to suppose that preachers are accustomed to overstate both its nature and consequences, we would take that man with us to the scenes of Christ's great struggle with the powers of darkness. We would ask him who this mysterious person is, who is thus led to shameful execution? We remind him that this is none other than the Son of God himself; that, though found in fashion as a man, this is that eternal Word who was "before all things, and by whom all things consist." We bid him remember that even the scrutiny of Omniscience could find no fault in this sufferer: a voice from Heaven had proclaimed, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And, nevertheless, all the vials of Divine wrath seem to be emptied upon him: as though he had been the vilest of malefactors, he is abandoned of God; and all the powers of

darkness bend against him their malice and might. This is because, though himself free from all sin, whether original or actual, he has voluntarily become the substitute of sinners, and has entered into covenant to exhaust the penalties due to their guilt. But what must sin be, what its hatefulness in God's sight, if it were punished thus fearfully in the person of Christ? If, when only imputed, imputed moreover to the most illustrious of beings, to him who "thought it not robbery to be equal with God", and who had been daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him", sin brought shame, and agony, and death, can sin be of less than infinite guiltiness? can sinners be incurring less than infinite punishment? I have nothing but the Atonement by which to measure sin. The Atonement alone shows me what sin is in God's sight. There are very terrible illustrations of God's hatred of sin in the miseries and disasters to which it has been parent. And the ven-

geance, with which the impenitent are threatened, seems yet more tremendous than any of the retributions which have hitherto been awarded. But, as to past visitations, whether in deluge or flame, we feel that they were only temporal, and therefore to be calculated; and, as to future, we know them only in prophecy, and therefore feebly and indistinctly.

But the sacrifice of Christ, whilst presenting the demerit of sin as actually incalculable, gives its evidence in so tangible a shape, that we know not how the most wilful are to evade it. We say to the man, who, doubtful whether or not sin be indeed exceeding sinful, has accompanied us to Calvary, can sin be of little guiltiness, can its consequences be inconsiderable, when God bade the sword awake against His fellow, and hid His face from him, and bruised him, and put him to grief, because he had placed himself in our stead, and was therefore numbered with the transgressors? Can you



think that God will deal lightly with you, though He dealt thus sternly with His well-beloved Son, and that justice will not be rigid in exacting penalties from you, when it would not relax one tittle of its demands, though its victim was the spotless, yea, even the Divine? Oh, there is no representation, no image, of hell, which should be half as appalling as the anguish and death of the Redeemer. Come with us, impenitent sinners—we wish to show you the miseries to which you wantonly expose yourselves. But we will not strive to withdraw the veil which shrouds a future world, that there, upon their sea of fire, you may behold the wicked tormented night and day. We will not strive to echo to your ear those fearful cries which are wrung from the lost, as they toss to and fro, and cannot find rest. We have indeed to shew you a being, stretched out in anguish; and we have to bid you hearken to a cry, as of one sorely disquieted. But the being in

anguish is the Redeemer, nailed to the cross; and the cry is that which issues from his lips: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" Yes, contemplate this amazing victim, remember his innocence, think on his dignity, observe his sufferings, listen to his exclamations; and then consider what you yourselves are, the withered and sapless things which might long ago have been cut down as cumberers of the ground. Look upon Christ as the stately cedar-tree, glorious in its stature, its branches, its foliage; but bending beneath the tempest, riven by the thunder; and then turn thought upon yourselves, the stunted and almost worthless remains of a once noble forest; and you ought to feel as though hell were upon you in terrors which baffle all description, when the simple exclamation is uttered: "Howl, fir-tree; for the cedar is fallen."

But we now proceed to more general statements and illustrations of the truth

which these words seem designed to convey. We wish you to observe, that not only was the Captain of our Salvation “made perfect through sufferings”, but the same discipline has been employed from the first, in regard of all those whom God has conducted to glory. There has been no more observable feature of the Divine dealings, whether under the patriarchal, legal, or Christian dispensation, than this of the employment of affliction as an instrument of purification. It has not been found that any amount of piety has secured its possessor against troubles: on the contrary, the evidence has seemed the other way; the piety has appeared to expose men to additional and severer trials.

And it is remarkable, that the nearer the approach to the times of the Gospel, the intenser was the discipline of suffering; as though God had designed to prepare men for an increase in tribulation, with an increase in privilege. The patri-

archs were not exposed to such trials as came on their descendants in Egypt ; and the Jews in Egypt were not so persecuted as the Jews in the times of the Maccabees, when the coming of the promised Messiah drew nigh. And when the Messiah had come, then, in place of introducing exemption from trouble, he did but give the godly a charter of tribulation, so that his followers, to the very end of time, were taught to expect affliction, and to welcome it as preparing them for Heaven. In the earlier ages of the Christian Church it was more apparent than in the latter, that tribulation was to accompany righteousness; for then the heathen raged, and the people imagined a vain thing,—Satan having stirred up his emissaries to attempt, by fierce persecution, the extirpation of the infant religion. But, in every age, as has been well observed, the righteous have had to pass through a strait gate, and of that gate the cross has been the key. “The kingdom of Heaven suf-

fereth violence, and the violent take it by force"—force, of which themselves are the subjects, seeing that self-denial and self-mortification are the great business of a Christian. And over and above the vigorous discipline of himself, which is required from the believer in Christ, and which necessarily weaves much of pain into his portion, there is ordinarily allotted to him a more than common share of the troubles of life, so that, however he may escape actual persecution from the world, he is called on to encounter one long series of trials. Nor should it be forgotten, that afflictions are strictly penal things, the consequences of sin, in the way either of natural consequence, or of Divine retribution. And if such be their character, we ought to be careful that we do not dissociate them from sin—as, indeed, Scripture never does; for, even when speaking of them as merciful and beneficial, it still calls them "chastisements", and it is essential to the very notion of a

chastisement, that a fault be presupposed.

But view the matter in what light you will, the fact is undisputed, that, through much tribulation, men enter the kingdom of Heaven. And we do not see that any fact should be more startling to those who are living without God, and perhaps secretly hoping for impunity at the last. If they survey the dealings of their Maker with this earth, they cannot deny that righteousness has been commonly overborne and depressed, and that sorrow has been either the discipline or the chastisement of men most distinguished by their virtues. They cannot deny that the cedar has been bent and blighted by the hurricane, whilst, comparatively, sunshine and calm have been around the fir. And from this they are bound to conclude the great fact of a judgment to come. The conclusion has been drawn in the darkest ages. The very heathen could perceive, that, if there were a moral Governor of the uni-

verse, He must design to rectify, in another state of being, the disorders of this, and, by a wholly different distribution of good and of evil, set virtue and vice in their appropriate positions. The rending of the cedar was an argument, even when Revelation was wanting, of the burning of the fir; and the Gospel has, in this respect, only confirmed the conjectures, or rather the conclusions, of reason.

But, independently on the general testimony to a judgment to come, which is thus borne by the afflictions of the righteous, let these afflictions be regarded as designed, whether for discipline or chastisement, and may they not be affirmed eloquent of the future miseries of the wicked? Suppose it to be for purposes of discipline that God employs suffering—what does this prove but that human nature is thoroughly corrupt, requiring to be purged as by fire, ere it can be fitted for happiness? And if there must be this fiery purification, what is

the inference which ungodly men should draw, if not that they will be given up hereafter to the unquenchable flame, given up to it when that flame can neither annihilate their being, nor eradicate their corruption? Or, if the suffering be used for purposes of chastisement, is not every pain, which the righteous are made to endure, a witness of God's fixed determination of punishing sin, an evidence of His holding sin in such utter abomination, that, wheresoever He finds it, He must print the tokens of His vengeance? We may here reason in the same manner, if not with the same force, as when we contemplated the sufferings of Christ. We may say, that, if ever God could overlook evil, and suffer it to pass without retribution, it would be when committed by those whom He loves, with whom He has entered into covenant, and for whom He reserves everlasting felicities. Yet, on the contrary, it is found that He is apparently even more



watchful in their case, than in that of the open despisers of His authority, that no sin should be passed by without receiving correction. Hear how He speaks to His chosen people the Jews: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore will I punish you for all your iniquities." He makes, you observe, the very intimacy of His connexion with a people a reason for His leaving no iniquity unpunished. And upon this principle He has acted, and still acts. Witness the wanderings and sufferings of the patriarchs. Witness the dispersions and captivities of Israel. Witness the untimely death of Moses and Aaron, the troubles of Eli, the sorrows of David. Witness the miseries of a long train of worthies, servants of the living God, but still often provoking Him by their inconsistencies, who were "stoned, and sawn asunder, and tempted, and slain with the sword". Witness the present afflictions which fall to the lot of the righteous,

family dissensions, frequent deaths, straitened circumstances, ungrateful children. These are all evidences, that God will not overlook sin in those whom He loves ; nay that, as though to show that no consideration whatsoever can prevail on Him to leave sin unpunished, He makes His very affection towards a nation, or individual, an additional reason for His recompensing iniquity. If so, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear ? Surely, the blows which descend on the righteous should make the wicked start: as the cedar bends and shakes, the fir-tree should tremble : if anything can fill the impenitent with fear, it should be the observing how God deals with His most faithful servants.

It is probable enough that the wicked may be disposed to congratulate themselves on their superior prosperity, and to look with pity, if not with contempt, on the righteous, as the God whom they serve seems to reward them with nothing but trouble. But this can only be through

want of consideration ; let the wicked but ponder the facts of the case, and there is nothing that should so excite their dread of the future, as the present misery which falls to the lot of the good. As we drew the material for a description of hell from what was exhibited on Calvary, we are ready also to draw it from the histories of God's most exemplary servants. We may suppose that we have amongst our hearers those, who, though living in sin, and strangers to repentance, comfort themselves with a general notion of God's great lovingkindness, and expect, that, however necessary it may have been for Him to enact laws, and issue threatenings, He will finally be proved too tender in His compassion to inflict severe pain on His creatures. And there are many ways in which we might expose the hollowness of such an expectation, and prove to those, by whom it is indulged, that they must be wilfully deceiving, and therefore destroying, themselves. But

there is no proof that should be so convincing as a practical ; no argument can be like a fact, in demonstrating the unsoundness of a favourite opinion.

Come, then, ye who think that God will not visit sin, that His love will at last move Him to the remitting its penalties ; come ye with us to the house of mourning, the house of the righteous, but, nevertheless, the afflicted. Ye know the parties whom calamity has overtaken. Ye know those parents who are bending over the dead body of an only child, cut down in his prime, when he seemed just about to requite all the cares, and fulfil the best hopes, of those who gave him life. Ye know that widow, from whom hath been taken away, in a moment, the husband of her youth, and to whom orphans are clinging with that strange bewildered look, which shews a consciousness that something terrible has happened, but at the same time an inability to comprehend the fulness of the evil.

Ye know that father, who is sitting in mute anguish, stung to the quick by the sharpest of all inflictions, the profligacy of a favourite son. Ye know that merchant, who has been hunted by trouble upon trouble, till at length affairs are hopeless, and actual beggary stares him in the face. Ye know, we say, these various parties. Ye know that, so far as man can judge his fellow men, they have all lived "soberly, righteously, and godly, in the world", walking in the commandments of the Lord, and adorning, in all things, the doctrine of the Saviour. Ye know that they have been the professed disciples of Christ; and that, so far from there having been cause to count the profession hypocritical, there has been abundant and growing evidence of sincerity.

What say you, then, to their bitter and multiplied sorrows? What say you to the proof which these sorrows furnish of God's hatred of sin, and of His resolve to

take vengeance? Shall ye indeed escape, ye, whose lives are a contempt of His laws, and almost a denial of His existence, when those who love Him most, and serve Him best, are thus visited for the backslidings and inconsistencies which are noted by the Omniscient, though perhaps unobserved by men? If any thing can startle you, if any thing can show you that the Almighty will punish sin, and punish it rigorously, it must be this. Those righteous parents, bending in anguish over their child—has God smitten them so heavily? Then ye ought to view in them yourselves, cowering hereafter before the wrath of the Lord. That widow, has God left her thus desolate, though eminent by her piety? Then her tears should fall on you as molten lead, making you already feel the fiery droppings of vengeance. That father, distinguished by his zeal and love for the Redeemer, is he, indeed, pierced through and through by the ingratitude and profligacy of his child?

The arrows should enter your own souls, and you should already be torn by the fierce anger of your Maker. That merchant, who was diligent to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness", is he indeed bankrupt and beggared? Ye should have before you the spectacle of yourselves in utter destitution, thrown on eternity without a shred, without a hope. Ah, thus, men of the world, men on whom perhaps everything looks smilingly, and who are indulging the thought that God will not be extreme to mark what is done amiss, thus should all the sorrows of the righteous fill you with apprehensions and forebodings; and not a funeral should move from their doors, and not a tear drop from their eyes, and not a grief sadden their hearts, without suggesting to you the penetrating exclamation of our text: "Howl, fir-tree; for the cedar is fallen."

Now we think that we must, by this time, have put you in possession of that

very peculiar argument which lies in the words of our text, an argument from the known fact, that the righteous are sorely chastened of God, to the alleged fact, that God will hereafter recompense all the wickedness of the wicked. And we are disposed to consider that the perpetual furnishing of this argument may have been among the reasons why God has appointed or allowed so close an alliance between piety and suffering. The case might have been altogether different. The righteous might have been exempt from trouble. It might then have been said, Look at the men who are confessedly justified by faith, and who are to be pardoned when brought to God's bar. Beyond all doubt, they commit sins, often, perhaps, flagrant sins. But these sins work them no injury here, and they are not to be punished for them hereafter. What proof then is there that God is much displeased and dishonored by sin, seeing that He can thus suffer it to pass wholly unno-



ticed? And if He can quite tolerate it, or overlook it, in the one set of men, why will He be inexorable in the case of another? And is there then, after all, much ground for alarm, even if we continue to our last day, the impenitent and unbelieving?

But God has fully provided against this plausible argument, by appointing that righteousness should rather insure than avert the temporal retributions of sin. By verifying, in every age, the words, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous", He has given a continued and most intelligible demonstration, that sin, from its very nature, and under all possible circumstances, must excite His abhorrence and entail His vengeance. He has accomplished His great ends through sorrow and tribulation: the Church has been nourished by the blood of her children, and believers have had to exclaim with the Psalmist, "My tears have been my meat day and night." But who

doubts that Christianity might have made progress through other means, and that the growth of individuals in grace might have been promoted and secured by other processes than those of affliction? The kings of the earth might, from the first, have patronized, in place of persecuting, Christianity; and individual piety might have been nursed, rather than ground, into strength. But, on such a supposition, the world, as we have shewn you, would have been without any practical evidence that sin was certain to be followed by punishment. Whereas now, the close and known alliance between piety and suffering, keeps before the view of the most careless the nature of sin, and its inevitable consequence: the cedar, as it is bent by the hurricane, admonishes the fir-tree of a storm that will tear it up by the roots.

And when we come to our last trial, you may all perceive how emphatic a use may be made of the sufferings of the

godly. Let the man appear who has dared to presume on the loving-kindness of God, and to calculate on its interfering to ward off threatened punishment. By whom shall he be confronted? Who are they that shall be cited as witnesses against him? Even those whom one of the celestial company pointed out to the Evangelist John, demanding, "What are these which are arrayed in white robes, and whence came they?" And the answer was, "These are they which came out of great tribulation." These shall give evidence. These shall testify, by their registered sorrows, and multiplied afflictions, that God furnished a standing demonstration to men of His unalterable resolve of punishing sin; and that the whole course of His dealings with those He best loved, was prophetic of the judgments which would finally overtake the despisers of His law. Oh, if a sinner should then venture to plead that he had heard much of the compassion of God, that it was the

known tenderness of the Divine nature which had led him to neglect the preparing for the judgment, and that he would indeed have forsaken evil courses, had he believed them so hateful to his Maker, and so provocative of wrath—can you not imagine his utter confusion, as the righteous stood before him, with their sighs scarce yet hushed, and their tears scarce yet dried ; as those, whom he had known upon earth as the servants of Christ, were called to remind him of all that discipline of trial, and all that retribution of offences, which had marked their career, and perhaps moved his pity ; and as the Judge demanded of him why he had never taken home to himself the self-evident warning, “Howl, fir-tree ; for the cedar is fallen”?

But finally, it may certainly be inferred from these words, when applied in the modes thus indicated, that the present afflictions of the righteous shall be vastly exceeded by the future of the wicked.

“The cedar is fallen”—there is nothing said as to the violence with which it was torn up, or laid low. But the fir-tree is called upon to “howl”, as though it were about to be rent and shivered, as by the tempest and the thunder. What an awful argument is this, if you take the cedar, as we first took it, as our Saviour himself. Behold this victim: “behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto his sorrow!” behold him as he is derided by the multitude, nailed to the cross, deserted of God: and then say to yourselves, what howl can be deep enough, wild enough, for the fir-tree, when thus has this cedar fallen? In some respects, beyond doubt, the sufferings of the Mediator were peculiar to himself, such as no other man can endure or imagine. But there was one form of anguish from which he was free, against which he was secure. He knew nothing of the terrors of an evil conscience. And if sin could be thus visited on a holy being, what will be its retribution in the

persons of those by whom it has been committed? If he, to whom sin was only imputed, could be thus pierced and lacerated, what shall be the doom of hardened transgressors, in whom sin has reigned, and who have given themselves up to the working iniquity? Indeed we may be sure that the avengings of conscience will rend the fir-tree, as no storm ever rent the cedar. We have present evidence of this. What is there, even now, which is comparable, in its painfulness, to that conviction of sin, which is produced in those who are subject to the renewing influences of God's Spirit? They know the meaning of the words of Job: "For the arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit; the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me." And if an awakened conscience can thus goad and agitate men, who are yet within range of mercy, men whom it is only urging to escape the wrath to come, what will that conscience

do when the day of grace shall be passed, and there shall be no word of hope to mingle with its rebukes and reproaches? Even now, conscience occasionally seems armed with the terrors of a fiend; so that it is only through taking refuge in the provisions of the Gospel that men are saved from utter madness. What will it be, when there is no longer a place of refuge, and when, nevertheless, the mind shall be incapable of being put out of joint, and thus finding a wild relief in the derangement of the maniac? Indeed, the wretchedness of the individual who has just been made to feel what sin is, should cause the saying, "Howl, fir-tree; for the cedar is fallen", to bring before the wicked the most appalling of pictures, that of themselves hunted by a fury from which they cannot flee, because they bear it about with them; gnawed on by a worm which can never be exterminated, because fed by sins which can never be forgiven.

We thank God that the axe is not yet laid to the roots ; that what is done to the cedar may still be used to the moral culture of the fir. It was thus with the Jews, to whom our text originally applied. Had the Jews been warned, had the patience, the meekness, the benevolence, of the suffering, but innocent, Christ, moved them to repentance, the hurricane would never have been let loose against the fir-tree, to shiver its boughs and to scatter its leaves, so that the whole globe was strewn with the fragments. And if we would be warned by the afflictions of good men, the dews of grace would so fall around the roots, and the sun of righteousness so shine upon the branches, that the fir would grow into the cedar, and be secure of the being finally transplanted into the Paradise of God. In this department of the vineyard, the Church of the Redeemer, we trust that the cedars are to be found : but we dare not doubt that the fir-trees are also here. In some there is



the leaf of profession, but not the fruit of practice: in others, even the profession is wanting, and the naked boughs seem to be ready to be bound in bundles for the burning.

But, nevertheless, we would fain hope that the cedars abound. We now come seeking fruit: shall we seek it in vain? This is the single occasion in the whole year, on which we ask your contributions to a charitable object, the single occasion, on which we can, in the least degree, judge whether our preaching have had any effect in stirring you to good works. Yes, I must look to your contributions towards the schools of the ward and parish in which we hold these weekly meetings, for evidence whether the sermons I deliver make way into the heart, and have influence on the life. On the cedars, the trees that shall be sheltered when God's fury is let loose on this creation, grows, amongst other rich fruits, the fruit of charity or love; and numbers who

need this fruit, and numbers who must perish without this fruit, are inquiring whether it may not be gathered abundantly here. Such is simply our application of the subject. If ye be the cedars—and woe is unto you if ye be not!—hear ye not the storm? see ye not the lightnings?—if ye be the cedars, ye will prove it by charity, a fruit which the cedar always bears; and poor children are now eagerly waiting for the proof: their eyes are upon the trees, anxiously expecting the fruit: oh, it were worse for yourselves than even for them, if they should expect in vain, and thus you be proved but cumberers of the ground.

And if there be any to whom so sad a description applies, let them yet bear away with them one word of exhortation. God hath come, year after year, seeking fruit, and as yet hath found none. He hath given you the shower, He hath given you the sunshine; but, as yet, you are nothing more than cumberers of the

ground. And now He tries another mode. He causes His storm to beat against the cedars : He directs His lightnings against them ; because, though they are plants of righteousness, they suffer their verdure to be sometimes soiled, and their fruit blighted, through exposure to the cold air of a world lying in wickedness. He does this in view of the fir-trees, as though to admonish them, by His dealings with the cedars, that, sooner or later, they which “ bring not forth good fruit, shall be hewn down and cast into the fire.” Perhaps this may prevail : it would be a blessed result, but one which might justly be looked for, if the careless could only be prevailed on to consider : the sufferings of the righteous might save the wicked from future torments, and that which prepares a good man for Heaven might snatch a bad one from hell.

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## SERMON VII.

### ENEMIES OF THE CROSS.

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EPISTLE TO PHILIPPIANS, III, 18.

*For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you, even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ.*

THAT, up to the very close of the present dispensation, the visible Church should consist of wheat and tares, had been distinctly foretold by our Lord in sundry of the parables which he delivered whilst on earth. And it appears, from many insinuations in the Epistles of the New Testament, that the mixture commenced with the earliest diffusion of Christianity, so that, even when it required great sacrifice to embrace the religion of Jesus, many had the form of godliness, and yet denied the power thereof. It would seem

hardly to have been expected, that, in the first ages of the Church, when to profess the being a Christian was almost sure to expose to persecution and wrong, many would have embraced the new religion, and yet not have received its doctrines into the heart. At present, the case is altogether different : no marvel if there be so much of merely nominal Christianity, when nothing is surrendered in making the profession, when men assume it in infancy, and retain it without being required to give up what they love, or face what they fear.

Yet, however probable it might have seemed that the first converts to Christianity would all have been Christians in deed, as well as in name, we learn, as we have already said, from Scriptural statements, that the tares were mingled with the wheat in the earliest Churches which Evangelists founded. And it certainly ought to make us all watchful that we rest not content with outward privileges,

when we observe that there could be hollowness of heart, even when persecution was sifting the body of Christ ; and that men, who had received the truth from the lips of Apostles, and perhaps also baptism at their hands, could remain servants to the flesh, and enemies to the cross. For if, as we learn from the text, there could be "enemies to the cross" in a primitive Church, who will dare to conclude them unknown in colder and more formal days? Let us not then for a moment imagine that the text is one in which we ourselves have no personal interest! Where is the Christian pastor who could hesitate to make to his people the very declaration which St. Paul makes to the Philippians? The enemies of the cross may be amongst ourselves: the race, alas, cannot be extinct: and, as we value our hopes for eternity, it must become us to examine what constitutes an enemy of the cross, that we may ascertain whether such description apply to ourselves. Though

before we enter on this important examination — an examination peculiarly appropriate to Passion Week—it will be right that we observe attentively the terms which St. Paul employs in delivering his warning against the enemies of the cross. There is something very worthy of note, both in the frequency of his warning, and in the grief which he felt at having such a warning to give. Hence we have two topics of discourse with which to engage your attention, and each, we trust, will furnish matter for profitable meditation. We are to speak, in the first place, on the urgency and the grief, with which St. Paul warned the Church against the enemies of Christ's cross. We are then, in the second place, to examine who and what those persons are, who may fitly be described by so fearful a title.

Now you will observe that the Apostle speaks of having “often told” the Philip-  
pians of those enemies of the cross, against whom he felt it needful to warn them. It

was not now for the first time that he pointed out a class of professing Christians, whose doctrine, or whose practice, should cause them to be shunned, rather than copied, by others. And it deserves to be very carefully considered that St. Paul was thus frequent in delivering the same lesson, as though he had no fear of wearying by repetition, but felt that the important warning could not be too often inculcated. We learn from this, not only that he thought it of great moment that the Philippians should be on their guard against the enemies of the cross, but that he feared the lesson would be forgotten, if not repeated time after time. We may readily understand why the Apostle was thus anxious to warn the Church against the enemies of the cross, seeing that nothing is more contagious than example, and these pestilential men, if not authoritatively pointed out and denounced, were likely, as a corrupt leaven, to diffuse an evil influence



through the whole surrounding body. But then it was not only the greatness of the danger which made him frequent in admonition, it was also the consciousness that there must be "line upon line, precept upon precept"; that men are so prone to forget even important and fundamental truth, that it must be told them again and again, pressed afresh on their attention, even as though it had never before been handled or enforced. It was nothing to the Apostle, that his hearers might charge him with repetition, and complain that he did but lead them over well-beaten ground, when he might have conducted them to new tracts of truth. He knew what was most for their interest, and cared nothing for their censure, so that he might but advance their salvation.

And there is, in this one word "often" of our text, a lesson to ministers of the Gospel in every age of the Church, that they consult what may be the interest, rather than the inclination, of those who

are committed to their spiritual charge. It is not to be denied, that, in most Christian congregations, there is an incessant craving for novelty, so that they would complain as if the preacher had defrauded them of their rights, were he to dwell almost entirely on simple truths, a hundred times told. And yet these simple, these often-told truths, are those which most require the being pressed upon men: what is there which it is of more importance that they know, than the truth of their own sinfulness, and of a provided deliverance through the sacrifice of Christ? Neither does it follow that these truths are wielding due influence, because men are familiar with them as with a household word, and, in hearing them, hear nothing with which they have not been long time acquainted. The truth may have never passed into the heart, though it have entered the head; and it is the business of the preacher to repeat it again and again, hoping, on each

announcement, that it may be seized on by that Spirit, which alone can make the word effectual to conversion, and applied to produce conviction where there has heretofore been indifference. But, alas, men look upon sermons in much the same way as on any other public lectures, trying them by the same rules, and applying to them the same criticism. Whereas, in any other lecture, there may be no need for the repetition of principles and propositions: once laid down, the lecturer may assume them in every after discussion; and he would be verily guilty of insulting the understanding, or reproaching the memory, of his audience, were he continually to recur to what had been established, in place of advancing to higher branches of truth. It is altogether different with the preacher. As he aims at the heart, rather than the head, he can never be sure that he has gained due lodgment for elementary truth: and he knows moreover, that, even if he have,

he cannot repeat it without affording his hearers opportunity of benefit. For what is so likely to nourish humility, as the frequent inculcation of the doctrine of human depravity? what to give strength to faith, and ardency to love, as the frequent exhibition of the cross of the Redeemer? Yet we put it to yourselves, in all candour, to judge whether there is not a distaste to the hearing what has been often heard before; whether it would not be charged upon the preacher, as betraying great want of industry, or great poverty of imagination, were he, week after week, to present the same subject, or deliver the same warning.

And yet he might be only copying the example of St. Paul, as shewn in his dealings with the church at Philippi. Were I to feel that those entrusted to my charge were specially in danger from the incursions of Popery, I might take continually, as my subject of public address, the errors of the Roman Church, and continually

utter warning against partaking of her sins. Were I to know that there were many amongst you who had a leaning to Socinianism, I might, sermon after sermon, insist on the divinity of Christ, and set forth the disastrous condition of such as think to do without an Atonement for sin. Were I to have cause to fear that there were patrons amongst you of any one wickedness, and that there was likelihood of that wickedness gaining currency from example, I might denounce that one wickedness as statedly as I appeared in the pulpit, as though I had nothing to do but to expose its enormity, or had received holy orders for the one purpose of opposing its practice. And I know what would be said of this sameness of address. I should be prepared for the severe and cutting remark; for the suspicion that I dwelt on one point, because avoiding the trouble of investigating others; or the taunt, that I had too contracted a mind for the wide sweep of

Scriptural truth. Yet, all the while, might I be actuated by the same motives as St. Paul, and following the example of this blessed Apostle. And men, Christian men, would do well to pause before pronouncing harsh censure on the frequent repetition whether of precept or warning, and to consider whether there may not be something, in their circumstances or conduct, which has suggested to the preacher a necessity for thus reiterating truth. For the preacher can at least appeal to high precedent for the course which he pursues. The preacher can urge, that the enforcing well-known truths on his hearers may be, every whit, as much his duty as the endeavouring to lead them on to perfection. And he can give, as his proof, that St. Paul, when warning the Philippians, by his Epistle, against certain of their Church, who dishonoured the Gospel, was but repeating in writing what he had frequently delivered by speech, seeing that his own expression is, “Many

walk, of whom I have told you *often*, and now tell you, even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ."

But it is not merely the frequency with which the Apostle had delivered the same warning, which deserves to be gathered from the words now before us. We ought to pause for a moment, and observe the emotion which the blessed Apostle betrayed, on having to repeat the reiterated warning. I do not know whether he had been moved to tears on former occasions; but now he could not restrain himself: he felt deep sorrow of soul; and it was with weeping that he again told his converts of the enemies of the cross. Perhaps it was the very circumstance of his having had to speak so often, which now afflicted the Apostle. That it should still be needful, after warnings so repeated, to put the Philippians on their guard, this may have been distressing to St. Paul, as proving that, notwithstanding all his labours, his converts were still but unstable in the

faith. Yet sorrow for other men's sins is one of the characteristics of godliness; and we may therefore suppose that what chiefly drew the tears of the Apostle, was the iniquity of those whom he described as enemies of the cross. David speaks of horror taking hold of him, and of rivers of water running down his eyes, because of the wicked who forsook God's law. The Apostle was not likely to be behind the Psalmist in sensitiveness. But there is something specially admirable in his tears, considering that, in all probability, the enemies of the cross were the enemies of St. Paul, ambitious and dissolute men, who sought to undermine his authority in the Church, and to rise into importance by bringing into contempt his doctrine and person. But the Apostle was of too noble a mind, too fraught with the loftier feelings of a Christian, to have regard to any thing personal to himself, when the honour of God, and the welfare of souls, were closely concerned. Could



the same be said of us? Should we be ready, if the cause of religion, and our own personal credit, were attacked by the same assailants, to forget all that had to do with ourselves, to regard the assailants merely as attacking religion, and to pray for them, and mourn for them, even as though, whilst set against God, they had done all in their power for promoting our happiness?

It is not so much anger as grief, which should be excited in us by the prevalence of iniquity: nature may make our eyes flash fire, but grace will make them shed tears, as God's law is broken, and His authority defied. There should be no feeling in the Christian's mind towards the doer of iniquity, but one of intense pity and compassion: the iniquity itself should be regarded with utter abhorrence; but he who commits it, with sorrow and affection, as a brother, though an alien; one for whom Christ died, though he thus crucifies the Lord of Life afresh. And

is it thus that we regard the sinner? Is every other feeling swallowed up in solicitude for his safety, and in concern for the despite that he is doing to God? Let us take St. Paul for our pattern, and not be content till our emotions bear resemblance to his. Here is the Church of the Philippians, infested by men who sought to "turn the grace of God into licentiousness", to destroy the authority of the Apostle, and ruin those converts over whom he was watching with a godly anxiety. Would you have been surprised had St. Paul, under such circumstances, spoken with bitterness and asperity, had he used terms of vehement reproach, and denounced the evil men as worthy of nothing but hatred and scorn? Indeed the Apostle was not slack in stating the enormity of their guilt, and the certainty of their punishment. He declared their glory to be in their shame, and their end to be destruction. But, nevertheless, with all his zeal and all his faithfulness, sor-

row was the predominant feeling: he forgot that these men were his enemies, and viewed them only as the enemies of God. And then there crowded on him the thoughts of the dishonour which they brought upon religion, and of the wretchedness which they were laying up for themselves. These unmanned him: these raised in him emotions which he could hardly control; and this dauntless Apostle, this champion of the truth, who shrank not from a world arrayed in defence of idolatry and falsehood, was moved for the moment even to tears; and—O worthy of imitation, as when he stood on Mars' hill, or wrought at his tentmaking, or professed himself ready, not only to be bound, but even to die, for the sake of his Lord!—was forced to say to the Philippians, that it was with “weeping” that he again told them of the enemies of the cross.

But it is time that we inquire into the special characteristics of those whom St.

Paul designates as “enemies of the cross of Christ”; for though the term may be applied to sinners of every description, we may justly suppose that there are certain classes to which it peculiarly belongs. Observe, then, the expression, “enemies of the cross of Christ”—not enemies of Christ himself, but enemies of his cross. We must infer from this, that the truths, opposed or disliked by the parties in question, were especially those associated with the death of the Redeemer, the lessons which may be said to be inscribed on his cross, or to flow from the great fact of his having given himself for the sins of the world. And this limitation of the enmity will enable us to select certain parties as more accurately falling under the description of the text, parties who, if they had their representatives in the days of St. Paul, are assuredly not without them in our own. Who, first of all, can more deserve to be described as an enemy of Christ’s cross, than the man

who, in any measure or degree, would set aside the work of Mediation, and look to his own righteousness to procure him salvation? We need not tell you that the Socinian, he who, rejecting the divinity of Christ, strives to do without the cross, contending that our Lord died thereon merely to set an example of patience, and not to make a propitiation for sin—we need not tell you that the Socinian is an enemy of the cross: the enmity there is so open and undisguised that it cannot need the being exposed by lengthened demonstration. But many, who are far from going the length of the Socinian in heretical doctrine, share his enmity to the cross of the Redeemer. I cannot explain the stupendous undertaking of our surety, I can find no sufficient reason for the humiliation and death of the Son of God, unless on the supposition that man had utterly destroyed himself by sin, and that no finite power could prevail to his deliverance. If you once suppose that man's

ruin was not utter and complete, that he did not lie in thorough moral helplessness beneath the anger of God, but only needed some assistance in order to his resuming the position he had lost, you make it, of all mysteries, the most hopelessly obscure, that there should have been so vast an interference on behalf of humankind ; for you represent the interference as exceeding the necessity ; and what could be so inexplicable, as that God should send His Son, when something less would have sufficed ?

But what, upon this shewing, is to be said of a man who attaches any worth to his works, or imagines that his own righteousness is to be partly instrumental in effecting his justification ? in effecting it, we mean, as a meritorious cause ? for of course, as an evidence, it cannot be dispensed with. We reply at once, that he is an enemy of the cross. Who is an enemy of the cross, if not he who impeaches either the necessity or the suffi-

ciency of the mighty sacrifice which was thereon offered for sin, and thus detracts, as far as in him lies, from the worth of the Atonement, and the fulness of the Mediator's merits? Who is an enemy of the cross, if not the man, who, in place of clinging to the cross, and resting on it all his hopes for eternity, would strengthen it with some human device, as though not ample enough alone to bear up the sinner? I denounce as an enemy not merely the man who arrays himself in open hostility, but him also who, with the profession of friendship, insinuates doubts of sufficiency, or throws suspicion upon worth. And though he may be a more manifest enemy to the cross of the Redeemer, who denies that there was offered thereon any sacrifice for sin, I know not why it should be necessarily worse to recognize no expiation than to suppose it defective. And, practically, that man supposes it defective, who, whatever he may profess to hold as to the death of the Redeemer, imagines

that his own righteousness is to have some efficiency in opening to him the Kingdom of Heaven. No, men and brethren, what is required of us by the Gospel, is, that we trust exclusively, without the least particle of reserve, without the least admixture from any other dependence, to the virtues of the atonement made by Christ in the flesh. There is both room and need for personal righteousness; inasmuch as it is no less certain, that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord", than that "by one offering hath Christ for ever perfected them that are sanctified." But personal righteousness does nothing towards procuring the pardon of sin, and everlasting happiness, whatever it may towards rendering us "meet for the inheritance of the saints." And therefore, to attach any worth to personal righteousness, to regard it, that is, as in any way a procuring cause of God's favour, is manifestly to throw a slur on the merits of Christ, as though of themselves inade-




quate to our wants, and requiring to be compounded with what ourselves can produce. And he who throws a slur on the merits of Christ is an enemy to his cross. I pray you, therefore, not to think that the enemies of the cross are to be found only amongst the heretical or the dissolute. They may exist among yourselves. They may be the moral, the charitable, the excellent in all the relations of life. And if there be one of you, who, in the matter of his salvation, does not take the Lord Jesus Christ as "all in all"; who, because he is exemplary in every relative duty, large in his relief of the poor, and foremost in all the enterprises of philanthropy, imagines that he is, in a measure, procuring for himself the rewards of eternity; oh, let that man know, that, if St. Paul could now rise from the grave, St. Paul who exclaimed, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ", this blessed Apostle would look upon him with grief

and trepidation : yea, he would be one of those whom St. Paul would describe in such terms as these : “ I tell you, even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ.”

But if others besides the heretical and dissolute come under the definition of enemies of the cross, the term, no doubt, is specially applicable to those whose doctrine or practice is openly at variance with the Gospel of Christ. We have already referred to denial of the Divinity of our Lord, and shall not now insist further on that enmity to the cross which every such system of theology displays. But it is necessary that we look somewhat carefully at the case of practice inconsistent with a Christian profession ; for here the enmity, if not as open and declared, is every jot as real and decided. We have often had occasion to speak to you of the demonstration which Christ's sacrifice gave of God's hatred of sin, and of the impossibility that He should ever leave it unpunished.

There was inscribed on the cross such a testimony against sin as would not have been delivered, had Adam's apostacy been followed by the utter destruction of our race; nay, such as will never issue from those dismal abodes in which lost spirits shall endure eternal retributions. And because the cross is thus energetic in its witness to the hatefulness and destructiveness of sin, the Gospel is so constructed as to inculcate holiness in proffering forgiveness. The blood of atonement with which, so to speak, the offers of mercy are stained, warns us more emphatically than could the preaching of angels from Heaven, that the Gospel is not a scheme for covering, but for eradicating, sin; and that we cannot have part nor lot in its gracious promises, unless we crucify the flesh, with its affections and lusts. And now then, who is an enemy of the cross, if not the man who would "continue in sin that grace may abound"? The cross—that cross around which the Church is

just about to assemble her children—the cross was erected on this fallen creation, that beneath it might flourish “whatsoever things are lovely and of good report”, It rose in the midst of a vast moral wilderness, that it might draw the curse from the earth on which it stood, and become a centre of influence for holy thoughts and righteous lives. It was stamped with tokens of the holiness of God, and His abhorrence of evil, that none might flee to it who were not ready, “by patient continuance in well-doing”, to labour at the “adorning in all things the doctrine of the Saviour”. And if then a man would, in any measure or degree, encourage himself in sin by the mercies of redemption, arguing that God will never be extreme to punish those whom He has ransomed at so enormous a cost, or that he may persevere in wickedness without fear of exhausting the grace of the Redeemer, what is he but an enemy to the cross? The cross is the foe to iniquity,



and he would make it the friend and the patron. The cross teaches subjugation of ourselves, self-denial, and the mortification of every corrupt appetite; whereas he would make it teach the indulgence of passion, and proffer impunity to vice. This indeed is enmity, enmity in one of its worst shapes, when the cross, that was reared to destroy the empire of Satan, is used for the giving it permanence and strength.

Yet this man is not alone in his enmity: there are other enemies of the cross, besides those whom it encourages to continue in sin. What say you generally to the sins, the inconsistencies, of professing Christians? Take the covetous Christian, and view him by the light reflected from the cross. He who died on the cross was that Divine person, who, "though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich". It was he who came to loosen man's attachment to earthly and perish-

able things, and to rouse him to the seeking treasure above. What then is covetousness in a Christian, but direct opposition to the example set by Christ, and direct evidence that what Christ came to effect has in his case been, at best, but partially accomplished? Covetousness in a Christian is a libel on the cross; for to what does the cross pledge those who take it as their badge, if not to a preference of the eternal to the temporal, to contentment with a moderate portion of earthly possessions, and to the giving the affections to riches that fade not away? And because covetousness is thus distinctly opposed to what is required by the Gospel, and promised by every disciple of Christ, therefore must every covetous Christian be described as an enemy of the cross,—who is an enemy of the cross, if not he who recommends by his practice what that cross denounces and seeks to destroy? It is the same with every vice, with every form and acting of ungodli-

ness. The cross was planted, as we have already said, for the very purpose of extirpating iniquity, and gathering round itself "a peculiar people, zealous of good works". Tell me not then of a friend of the cross, who is not aiming, in all things, at spiritual perfection. Call not that man a friend of the cross, who would live knowingly in the practice of any one thing repugnant to the cross. The cross, so to speak, is the banner of the Christian ; and on it is emblazoned his profession. Loyalty to God, obedience to Christ, aversion from evil, mortification of lust, these are amongst the things to which he is pledged by his banner, and which he solemnly vowed when he ranked himself a soldier of the cross. Never then let him think that he cannot be an enemy, unless he have boldly and unblushingly deserted his ranks. There may be degrees of this enmity ; but, in one degree or another, it may be charged on a vast body of Christians. The openly dissolute and profane

are but too manifestly enemies of the cross: they live as though the cross had given impunity to sin; and what can be worse enmity than to turn the grace of God into licentiousness, to make the death of Christ patronize the iniquity which it aimed to abolish? But if there be any who, without going this length in enmity, are secretly displeased at the strictness of the requirements of the Gospel; any who, though they have professedly devoted themselves to Christ, are indulging passions which they know that his precepts condemn, or seeking objects from which his example would warn,—oh, it does not become man to pass judgment on his fellow-men; but, remembering how thorough a dedication Christ's service requires, and how God demands the surrender of the heart, we can hardly dare to doubt, that, were St. Paul now to rise from the grave, and to take account of the covetous, the sensual, the proud, the ambitious, who may be found even amongst men professing to give heed



to religion, he would have to say, Alas, there are many of whom I must tell you, even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ.

But we ought, before we conclude, to dwell with a little more minuteness on the expression "enemies of the cross"; for we doubt whether we have given so exact a description as that every one may recognize whether it belong to himself. In one sense we all ought to be enemies of the cross; for, regarding the cross as one of the engines of torture to the innocent Redeemer, we can but regard it with horror and aversion. I cannot love the tree to which he was nailed, nor the thorns with which they crowned him, nor the spear with which he was pierced. Though these were but instruments in the hands of his persecutors, and could not themselves be charged with producing his woe, they had nevertheless such part in the terrible tragedy that I could not behold them without dislike and repug-

nance. But the Apostle, in speaking of the cross, identifies with it the great sacrifice to which it served as an altar, and intends "by an enemy of the cross" one who dislikes, or opposes, the doctrine of an atonement for sin. And this doctrine may be disliked, or opposed, either in itself, or in the consequences to which it leads, and the obligations which it imposes. It is disliked and opposed in itself, when men would think to be saved, whether in whole or in part, by aught but simple, grateful reliance on the merits of Christ. It is disliked and opposed in its consequences and obligations, when men feel averse from the holiness demanded of all who would avail themselves of the propitiation for sin, and fall into practices condemned by Christ when he suffered in the flesh. Judge ye then whether the definition be in any way applicable to yourselves; whether ye are enemies of the cross, either by cherishing self-righteous thoughts, or by wilfully doing un-

righteous deeds. And no minister must dare to feel sure that there are no enemies of the cross amongst those whom God hath given into his spiritual charge. He must know too well how difficult it is to leave the work of our salvation in the hands of another, to repress pride and to mortify lust, to feel anything like confidence as to the absence from his people of an enmity, which may insinuate itself as a zeal for good works, or shew itself in little, but growing, conformities with the maxims and practices of the world.

And if there be enemies of the cross amongst us, enemies who perhaps hardly suspect their enmity, cause indeed there is that it be told with tears ; with tears to men, who have need to be affectionately warned ; with tears to God, who may peradventure give them repentance, and destroy an enmity which must issue in death. Yes, in death ; for, though it be simple truth, it cannot be too often told, that there is but one way of entering into

life, and that the gate, wide enough for any sinner, is too narrow for any sin. The cross is to save us; but it will save us only through the having its doctrines wound into the heart, and exhibited in the life. St. Paul speaks of Christ as slaying the enmity by his cross—"having slain the enmity thereby"—the meaning seeming to be that Christ, by his death, destroyed all distinction between Jew and Gentile, and removed all those causes of alienation which had kept the creature at a distance from the Creator. But the cross, though it have slain every other enmity, has still to encounter enmity towards itself. And here is our great battle, a battle in which the Spirit of the Lord alone can give victory, the overcoming our dislike to what is humiliating and sanctifying, and the closing with a process which delivers from the punishment only by delivering from the power of sin. The carnal mind, as it is enmity to God, so is it enmity to a method of salvation

which is worthy of God, as proposing to reproduce His image in the sinner. And therefore is it enmity to the cross; so that our prayer, our struggle, must be, that the carnal mind may be subdued; for then shall we discern the glories of the cross, and rejoice that it will not save, except by renewing, the soul. There is something fearfully reproachful to a man, in that he may be called an enemy of the cross. Heard we ever of a starving man being an enemy of food? or of a drowning man being an enemy to the rope which may save him? or of a sick man being an enemy to the medicine which may cure him? Alas, alas, that a stranger proposition than any of these should be true, that perishing sinners are enemies to the cross, the clinging to which is the escaping eternal destruction. God grant that none of us may ever count as foolishness the preaching of the cross. Foolishness? ah, what are we if we do not glory in the cross? That cross, as we have already said, hath been erected on

the broad desert of a sinful world, and beneath its shadow the withered flowers of Paradise have revived. It hath pointed to Heaven, and, at the same time, purified the earth. The planting it in any land has been the introducing a new and noble era — superstitions have been scattered, mind has expanded, arts have flourished ; and, in learning how to be saved, man has become a hundredfold worthier the name. Let us see to it that none of us “neglect this great salvation”. That so much has been done for us will only aggravate our doom, if we die in our sins. And so passing strange, so melancholy, so deplorable, will it be, that men should perish, although they were redeemed, that, if tears can ever fall in Heaven, angels, as they look on the lost, will tell one another, “even weeping”, they were enemies of the cross of Christ.

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